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OLDTOWN FOLKS BY H. BEECHER STOWE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

By the same Author,

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN . . . . .	2 vols.
A KEY TO UNCLE TOM'S CABIN . .	2 vols.
DRED . . . . .	2 vols.
THE MINISTER'S WOOING . . . .	1 vol.

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# OLDTOWN FOLKS.

BY

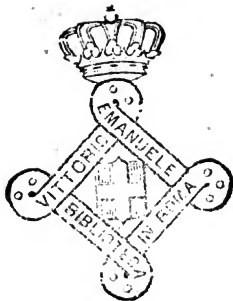
H. BEECHER STOWE,

AUTHOR OF "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1869.

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## PREFACE.

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GENTLE READER,—It is customary to omit prefaces. I beg you to make an exception in my particular case; I have something I really want to say. I have an object in this book, more than the mere telling of a story, and you can always judge of a book better if you compare it with the author's object. My object is to interpret to the world the New England life and character in that particular time of its history which may be called the seminal period. I would endeavour to show you New England in its *seed-bed*, before the hot suns of modern progress had developed its sprouting germs into the great trees of to-day.

New England has been to these United States what the Dorian hive was to Greece. It has always been a capital country to emigrate from, and North, South, East, and West have been populated largely from New England, so that the seed-bed of New England was the seed-bed of this great American Republic, and of all that is likely to come of it.

New England people cannot be thus interpreted without calling into view many grave considerations and necessitating some serious thinking.

In doing this work, I have tried to make my mind as still and passive as a looking-glass or a mountain lake, and then

to give you merely the images reflected there. I desire that you should see the characteristic persons of those times, and hear them talk; and sometimes I have taken an author's liberty of explaining their characters to you, and telling you why they talked and lived as they did.

My studies for this object have been Pre-Raphaelite,—taken from real characters, real scenes, and real incidents. And some of those things in the story which may appear most romantic and like fiction are simple renderings and applications of facts.

Any one who may be curious enough to consult Rev. Elias Nason's book, called "Sir Charles Henry Frankland, or Boston in the Colonial Times," will there see a full description of the old manor-house which in this story is called the Dench House. It was by that name I always heard it spoken of in my boyhood.

In portraying the various characters which I have introduced, I have tried to maintain the part simply of a sympathetic spectator. I propose neither to teach nor preach through them, any farther than any spectator of life is preached to by what he sees of the workings of human nature around him.

Though Calvinist, Arminian, High-Church Episcopalian, sceptic, and simple believer all speak in their turn, I merely listen, and endeavour to understand and faithfully represent the inner life of each. I myself am but the observer and reporter, seeing much, doubting much, questioning much, and believing with all my heart in only a very few things.—And so I take my leave of you.

HORACE HOLYOKE.

PREFACE  
TO  
THE ENGLISH AND LEIPZIG EDITION.

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SINCE the author of this work first appeared before the public, changes have occurred such as few are permitted to see in a lifetime.

The whole of the mighty system of wrong and injustice, of which "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was an imperfect shadow, has passed away like a dream of the night. America stands forth at this hour, in theory as well as in practice, devoted to liberty. That system of human slavery which seemed so impregnable, supported by such a power of wealth and by such political strength, has suddenly and in an hour broken up, and dissolved, and passed away, and there is found no more place for it.

In offering once more a book to friends in Europe, the author is saddened by the remembrance how many in whom it was her good fortune to find sympathetic readers in 1850 are gone from the hearths and homes of England to return no more.

In every circle and rank of life she can recall those whose sympathy and approval was dear to her, who are here no more.

Last in the list, not least, is the name of that illustrious lady who stood forth for the cause of liberty and humanity in an hour when the fate of that cause looked darkest and most doubtful, and whose friendship was one of the dearest treasures which England had to give.

Though her eye has for ever closed to earth, and she will never read these lines, yet it is a melancholy pleasure to inscribe this book as an offering

TO THE BELOVED MEMORY

OF

THE DUCHESS OF SUTHERLAND.



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# OLDTOWN FOLKS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### Oldtown and the Minister.

IT has always been a favourite idea of mine, that there is so much of the human in every man, that the life of any one individual, however obscure, if really and vividly perceived in all its aspirations, struggles, failures, and successes, would command the interest of all others. This is my only apology for offering my life as an open page to the reading of the public.

Besides this, however, every individual is part and parcel of a great picture of the society in which he lives and acts, and his life cannot be painted without reproducing the picture of the world he lived in; and it has appeared to me that my life might recall the image and body of a period in New England most peculiar and most interesting, the impress of which is now rapidly fading away. I mean the ante-railroad times,—the period when our own hard, rocky, sterile New England was a sort of half Hebrew theocracy, half ultra-democratic republic of little villages, separated by a pathless ocean from all the civilisation and refinement of the Old World, forgotten and unnoticed, and yet burning like live coals under this obscurity with all the fervid activity of an intense, newly-kindled, peculiar, and individual life.

My early life lies in one of these quiet little villages,—that of Oldtown, in Massachusetts. It was as pretty a village as

ever laid itself down to rest on the banks of a tranquil river. The stream was one of those limpid children of the mountains, whose brown, clear waters ripple with a soft yellow light over many-coloured pebbles, now brawling and babbling on rocky bottoms, dashing hither and thither in tiny cascades, throwing white spray over green-mossed rocks, and then again sweeping silently, with many a winding curve, through soft green meadows, nursing on its bosom troops of water-lilies, and bordering its banks with blue and white violets, snow-flaked meadow-sweet, and wild iris. Hither and thither, in the fertile tracts of meadow or upland through which this little stream wound, were some two dozen farmhouses, hid in green hollows, or perched on breezy hill tops; while close alongside of the river, at its widest and deepest part, ran one rustic street thickly carpeted with short velvet green grass, where stood the presiding buildings of the village.

First among these was the motherly meeting-house, with its tall white spire, its ample court of sheds and stalls for the shelter of the horses and the various farm-waggon which came in to Sunday services. There was also the school-house, the Academy, and Israel Scran's store, where everything was sold, from hoe-handles up to cambric needles, where the post-office was kept, and where was a general exchange of news, as the different farm-waggon stood hitched around the door, and their owners spent a leisure moment in discussing politics or theology from the top of codfish or mackerel barrels, while their wives and daughters were shopping among the dress goods and ribbons, on the other side of the store. Next to the store was the tavern,—with a tall sign-post which used to creak and flap in the summer winds, with a leisurely, rich, easy sort of note of invitation,—a broad veranda in front, with benches,—an open tap-room, where great barrels of beer were kept on draft, and a bar where the various articles pro-

scribed by the temperance society were in those days allowed an open and respectable standing. This tavern veranda and tap-room was another general exchange, not in those days held in the ill repute of such resorts now. The minister himself, in all the magnificence of his cocked hat and ample clerical wig, with his gold-headed cane in his hand, would sometimes step into the tap-room of a cold winter morning, and order a mug of flip from obsequious Amaziah the host, and, while he sipped it, would lecture with a severe gravity a few idle, ragged fellows who were spending too much time in those seductive precincts. The clergy in those days felt that they never preached temperance with so warm a fervour as between the comfortable sips of a beverage of whose temperate use they intended to be shining examples. The most vivid image of respectability and majesty which a little boy, born in a Massachusetts village in those early days could form was the minister. In the little theocracy which the Pilgrims established in the wilderness, the ministry was the only order of nobility. They were the only privileged class, and their voice it was that decided *ex cathedra* on all questions both in Church and State, from the choice of a Governor to that of the district-school teacher.

Our minister, as I remember him, was one of the cleanest, most gentlemanly, most well-bred of men,—never appearing without all the decorums of silk stockings, shining knee and shoe-buckles, well-brushed shoes, immaculately powdered wig, out of which shone his clear, calm, serious face, like the moon out of a fleecy cloud.

Oldtown was originally an Indian town, and one of the most numerous and powerful of the Indian tribes had possessed the beautiful tracts of meadow and upland farms that bordered the Sepaug River. Here the great apostle of the Indians had established the first missionary enterprise among

them, under the patronage of a society in England for the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts; here he had laboured and taught and prayed with a fervour which bowed all hearts to his sway, and gathered from the sons of the forest a church of devoted Christians. The harsh guttural Indian language, in the fervent alembic of his loving study, was melted into a written dialect; a Bible and hymn-book and spelling-book seemed to open a path to an Indian literature. He taught them agriculture, and many of the arts and trades of civilised life. But he could not avert the doom which seems to foreordain that those races shall dry up and pass away with their native forests, as the brook dries up when the pines and hemlocks which shaded its source are torn away.

In my boyhood, three generations had passed since the apostle died. The elms which two grateful Indian catechumens had set out as little saplings either side of his gateway were now two beautiful pillars, supporting each their firmament of leafy boughs, and giving a grand air of scholarly retirement to the plain, old-fashioned parsonage; but the powerful Indian tribe had dwindled to a few scattered families, living an uncertain and wandering life on the outskirts of the thrift and civilisation of the whites.

Our minister was one of those cold, clear-cut, polished crystals that are formed in the cooling down of society, after it, has been melted and purified by a great enthusiasm. Nobody can read Dr. Cotton Mather's biography of the first ministers of Massachusetts, without feeling that they were men whose whole souls were in a state of fusion, by their conceptions of an endless life; that the ruling forces which impelled them were the sublimities of a world to come; and that, if there be such a thing possible as perfect faith in the eternal and in-

visible, and perfect loyalty to God and to conscience, these men were pervaded by it.

More than this, many of them were men of a softened and tender spirit, bowed by past afflictions, who had passed through the refining fires of martyrdom, and came to this country, counting not home or kindred dear to them, that they might found a commonwealth for the beloved name and honour of One who died for them. *Christo et Ecclesie*, was the seal with which they consecrated all their life-work, from the founding of Harvard College down to the district school in every village. These men lived in the full spirit of him who said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" and the power of this invisible and mighty love shed a softening charm over the austere grandeur of their lives. They formed a commonwealth where open vice was wellnigh impossible; where such landmarks and boundaries and buttresses and breastworks hedged in and defended the morality of a community, that to go very far out of the way would require some considerable ingenuity and enterprise.

The young men grew up grave and decorous through the nursing of church, catechism, and college, all acting in one line; and in due time many studious and quiet youths stepped, in regular succession, from the college to the theological course, and thence to the ministry, as their natural and appointed work. They received the articles of faith as taught in their catechism without dispute, and took their places calmly and without opposition to assist in carrying on a society where everything had been arranged to go under their direction, and they were the recognised and appointed leaders and governors.

The Rev. Mr. Lothrop had come of good ministerial blood for generations back. His destination had always been for

the pulpit. He was possessed of one of those calm, quiet, sedate natures, to whom the temptations of turbulent nerves or vehement passions are things utterly incomprehensible.

Now, however stringent and pronounced may be the forms in which one's traditional faith may have been expressed, it is certain that temperament gradually, and with irresistible power, modifies one's creed. Those features of a man's professed belief which are unsympathetic with his nature become to his mind involved in a perpetual haze and cloud of disuse; while certain others, which are congenial, become vivid and pronounced; and thus, practically, the whole faith of the man changes without his ever being aware of the fact himself.

Parson Lothrop belonged to a numerous class in the third generation of Massachusetts clergy, commonly called Arminian,—men in whom this insensible change had been wrought from the sharply-defined and pronounced Calvinism of the early fathers. They were mostly scholarly, quiet men, of calm and philosophic temperament, who, having from infancy walked in all the traditions of a virtuous and pious education, and passed from grade to grade of their progress with irreproachable quiet and decorum, came to regard the spiritual struggles and conflicts, the wrestlings and tears, the fastings and temptations of their ancestors, with a secret scepticism,—to dwell on moralities, virtues, and decorums, rather than on those soul-stirring spiritual mysteries which still stood forth unquestioned and uncontradicted in their confessions of faith.

Parson Lothrop fulfilled with immaculate precision all the proprieties exacted in his station. Oldtown having been originally an Indian missionary station, an annual stipend was paid the pastor of this town from a fund originally invested in England for the conversion of the Indians; and so Parson Lothrop had the sounding-board of Eliot's pulpit put



up over the great arm-chair in his study, and used to call thither weekly the wandering remnants of Indian tribes to be catechised. He did not, like his great predecessor, lecture them on the original depravity of the heart, the need of a radical and thorough regeneration by the Holy Spirit of God, or the power of Jesus as a Saviour from sin; but he talked to them of the evil of drunkenness and lying and idleness, and exhorted them to be temperate and industrious; and when they, notwithstanding his exhortations, continued to lead an unthrifty, wandering life, he calmly expressed his conviction that they were children of the forest, a race destined to extinction with the progress of civilisation, but continued his labours for them with automatic precision.

His Sunday sermons were well written specimens of the purest and most elegant Addisonian English, and no mortal could find fault with a word that was in them, as they were sensible, rational, and religious, as far as they went. Indeed, Mr. Lothrop was quite an elegant scholar and student in literature, and more than once surprise had been expressed to him that he should be willing to employ his abilities in so obscure a town and for so inconsiderable a salary. His reply was characteristic: "My salary is indeed small, but it is as certain as the Bank of England, and retirement and quiet give me leisure for study."

He, however, mended his worldly prospects by a matrimonial union with a widow lady of large property, from one of the most aristocratic families of Boston. Mrs. Dorothea Lucretia Dixwell was the widow of a Tory merchant, who, by rare skill in trimming his boat to suit the times, had come through the revolutionary war with a handsome property unimpaired, which, dying shortly after, he left to his widow. Mrs. Dixwell was in heart and soul an Englishwoman, an adorer of church and king, a worshipper of aristocracy and

all the powers that be. She owned a pew in King's Chapel, and clung more punctiliously than ever to her prayer-book, when all other memorials of our connexion with the mother country had departed.

Could it be thought that the elegant and rich widow would smile on the suit of an obscure country Congregational clergyman? Yet she did; and for it there were many good reasons. Parson Lothrop was a stately, handsome, well-proportioned man, and had the formal and ceremonious politeness of a gentleman of the old school; and by family descent Mrs. Dorothea's remembrance could trace back his blood to that of some very solid families among the English gentry; and as there were no more noblemen to be had in America, marrying a minister in those days was the next best thing to it; and so Mrs. Dixwell became Mrs. Parson Lothrop, and made a processional entrance into Oldtown in her own coach, and came therein to church the first Sunday after her marriage, in all the pomp of a white brocade, with silver flowers on it of life-size, and white satin slippers with heels two inches high. This was a great grace to show to a Congregational church, but Mrs. Lothrop knew the duty of a wife, and conformed to it heroically. Nor was Parson Lothrop unmindful of the courtesies of a husband in this matrimonial treaty, for it was stipulated and agreed that Madam Lothrop should have full liberty to observe in her own proper person all the festivals and fasts of the Church of England, should be excused from all company, and allowed to keep the seclusion of her own apartment, on Good Friday, and should proceed immediately thereafter in her own coach to Boston, to be present at the Easter services in King's Chapel. The same procession to Boston in her own coach took place also on Whitsunday and Christmas. Moreover she decked her house with green boughs and made mince-pies at Christ-

mas time, and in short conducted her housekeeping in all respects as a zealous member of the Church of England ought.

In those days of New England, the minister and his wife were considered the temporal and spiritual superiors of everybody in the parish. The idea which has since gained ground of regarding the minister and his family as a sort of stipendiary attachment and hired officials of the parish, to be overlooked, schooled, advised, rebuked, and chastened by every deacon and deacon's wife or rich and influential parishioner, had not then arisen. Parson Lothrop was so calmly awful in his sense of his own position and authority, that it would have been a sight worth seeing to witness any of his parish coming to him, as deacons and influential parishioners now-a-days feel at liberty to come to their minister, with suggestions and admonitions. His manner was ever gracious and affable, as of a man who habitually surveys every one from above, and is disposed to listen with indulgent courtesy, and has advice in reserve for all seekers; but there was not the slightest shadow of anything which encouraged the most presuming to offer counsel in return. And so the marriage with the rich Episcopal widow, her processional entry into Oldtown, the coach and outriders, the brocade and satin slippers, were all submitted to on the part of the Oldtown people without a murmur.

The fact is, that the parson himself felt within his veins the traditional promptings of a far-off church-and-king ancestry, and relished with a calm delight a solemn trot to the meeting-house behind a pair of fat, decorous, old family horses, with a black coachman in livery on the box. It struck him as sensible and becoming. So also he liked a sideboard loaded with massive family plate, warmed up with the ruby hues of old wines of fifty years' ripening, gleaming through crystal

decanters, and well-trained man-servants and maid-servants, through whom his wig, his shoes, and all his mortal belongings, received daily and suitable care. He was to Mrs. Dorothea the most deferential of husbands, always rising with stately courtesy to offer her a chair when she entered an apartment, and hastening to open the door for her if she wished to pass out, and passing every morning and evening the formal gallantries and inquiries in regard to her health and well-being which he felt that her state and condition required.

Fancy if you can the magnificent distance at which this sublime couple stood above a little ten-year-old boy, who wore a blue checked apron, and every day pattered barefoot after the cows, and who, at the time this story of myself begins, had just, by reaching up on his little bare tiptoes, struck the great black knocker on their front door.

The door was opened by a stately black servant, who had about him an indistinct and yet perceptible atmosphere of ministerial gravity and dignity, looking like a black doctor of divinity.

"Is Mr. Lothrop at home?" I said, blushing to the roots of my hair.

"Yes, sonny," said the black, condescendingly.

"Won't you please tell him father's dying, and mother wants him to come quick?" and with that, what with awe, and what with grief, I burst into tears.

The kind-hearted black relaxed from his majesty at once, and said: "Lord bress yer soul! why, don't cry now, honey, and I'll jes' call missis;"—and in fact, before I knew it, he had opened the parlour door, and ushered me into the august presence of Lady Lothrop, as she used to be familiarly called in our village.

She was a tall, thin, sallow woman, looking very much

like those portraits by Copley that still adorn some old houses in Boston; but she had a gentle voice, and a compassionate, womanly way with her. She comforted me with a cake, which she drew from the closet in the sideboard; decanted some very choice old wine into a bottle, which she said I was to carry to my mother, and be sure and tell her to take a little of it herself. She also desired me to give her a small book which she had found of use in times of affliction, called "The Mourner's Companion," consisting mainly of choice selections from the English Book of Common Prayer.

When the minister came into the room, I saw that she gave a conjugal touch to the snowy plaited frill of his ruffled shirt, and a thoughtful inspection to the wide linen cambric frills which set off his well-formed hand, and which were a little discomposed by rubbing over his writing table,—nay, even upon one of them a small stain of ink was visible, as the minister, unknown to himself, had drawn his ruffles over an undried portion of his next Sunday's sermon.

"Dinah must attend to this," she said; "here's a spot requiring salts of lemon; and, my dear," she said, in an insinuating tone, holding out a richly-bound velvet prayer-book, "would you not like to read our service for the Visitation of the Sick,—it is so excellent."

"I am well aware of that, my love," said the minister, repelling her prayer-book with a gentle stateliness, "but I assure you, Dorothea, it would not do,—no, it would not do."

I thought the good lady sighed as her husband left the house, and looked longingly after him through the window as he walked down the yard. She probably consoled herself with the reflection that one could not have everything, and that her spouse, if not in the Established Church of England, was every way fitted to adorn it had he only been there.



## CHAPTER II.

## My Father.

MY good reader, it must sometimes have fallen under your observation that there is a class of men who go through life under a cloud, for no other reason than that, being born with the nature of gentlemen, they are nevertheless poor. Such men generally live under a sense of the dissatisfaction and rebuke of our good mother world; and yet it is easy to see all the while that even a moderate competence would at any moment turn their faults into virtues, and make them in everybody's opinion model characters.

Now you know there are plants to whom poor soil or rich soil seems to make no manner of difference. Your mullein and your burdock do admirably on a gravelly hillside, and admirably in rich garden soil. Nothing comes amiss with them. But take a saffron rose or a hyacinth and turn it out to shift for itself by the roadside, and it soon dwindles and pines, and loses its colour and shape, till everybody thinks such a wretched, ragged specimen of vegetation had better be out of the world than in it.

From all I remember of my poor father, he had the organisation and tastes of a scholar and a gentleman; but he was born the son of a poor widow, who hardly knew from week to week where the few hard-earned dollars were to come from which kept her and her boy in the very plainest food and clothing. So she thought herself happy when she apprenticed him to a paper-maker. Thence he had fought his way up with his little boy hands towards what to him was light and life,—an education. Harvard College, to his eyes, was like the distant vision of the New Jerusalem to the Christian. Thither he aspired, thither he meant to go. Through many

a self-denial, many an hour of toil,—studying his Latin grammar by night in the paper-mill, saving his odd pennies, and buying book after book, and treasuring each one as a mine of wealth,—he went on, till finally he gained enough of a standing to teach, first the common school, and then the Academy.

While he was teacher of the Academy he made his first false step, which was a false step only because he was poor,—he fell in love with my mother. If he had been well to do in the world, everybody would have said that it was the most natural and praiseworthy thing possible. It was some extenuation of his fault that my poor mother was very pretty and attractive,—she was in fact, one of my father's prettiest scholars. He saw her daily, and so the folly grew upon him, till he was ready to sacrifice his life's object, and consent to be all his days a poor academy teacher in Oldtown, that he might marry her.

One must be very much of a woman for whom a man can sacrifice the deepest purpose of his life without awaking to regret it. I do not say that my father did so; and yet I could see, from the earliest of my recollection, that ours was a household clouded by suppressed regrets, as well as embarrassed by real wants.

My mother was one of those bright, fair, delicate New England girls who remind us of the shell-pink, of the wood-anemone, or the fragile wind-flower; and every one must remember how jauntily they toss their gay little heads as they grow in their own mossy dells, at the root of old oaks or beeches, but how quickly they become withered and bedraggled when we gather them.

My mother's gaiety of animal spirits, her sparkle and vivacity, all went with the first year of marriage. The cares of housekeeping, the sicknesses of maternity and nursing,



drained her dry of all that was bright and attractive; and my only recollections of her are of a little quiet, faded, mournful woman, who looked on my birth and that of my brother Bill as the greatest of possible misfortunes, and took care of us with a discouraged patience, more as if she pitied us for being born than as if she loved us.

My father seemed to regard her with a half-remorseful tenderness, as he strove by extra reading and study to make up for the loss of that education the prospect of which he had sacrificed in his marriage. In common with a great many scholars of that day and of this, he ignored his body altogether, and tasked and strained his brain with night studies till his health sank under it; and consumption, which in New England stands ever waiting for victims, took his cold hand in hers, and led him quietly but irresistibly downward.

Such, to this moment, was my father's history; and you will see the truth of what I have been saying,—that a modest little property would have changed all his faults and mistakes into proprieties and virtues.

He had been sick so long, so very long, it seemed to my child-mind! and now there was approaching him that dark shadow so terrible to flesh and heart, in whose dimness every one feels an instinctive longing for aid. That something must be done for the dying to prepare them for their last lonesome journey is a strong instinct of every soul; and I had heard my mother pathetically urging my father that morning to send for the minister.

“What good will it do, Susy?” had been his answer, given with a sort of weary despondence; but still he had assented, and I had gone eagerly to bring him.

I was, for my part, strong in faith. I wanted to do something for my father, and I felt certain that the minister would know what was the right thing; and when I set forth with



him, in his full panoply,—wig and ruffles and gold-headed cane,—I felt somehow as if the ark of the covenant was moving down the street to our house.

My mother met the minister at the door, with tears yet undried in her eyes, and responded in the fullest manner to the somewhat stately, but yet gracious inquiries which he made as to my father's health and condition, and thanked him for the kindly messages and gifts of Lady Lothrop, which I had brought.

Then he was shown into the sick-room. My father was lying propped up by pillows, and with the bright flush of his afternoon fever on his cheeks. He was always a handsome man, fastidious about his person and belongings; and as he lay with his long thin hands folded together over the bed-clothes, his hair clinging in damp curls round his high white forehead, and his large, clear hazel eyes kindled with an unnatural brightness, he formed on my childish memory a picture that will never fade. There was in his eyes at this moment that peculiar look of suffering which I have sometimes seen in the eyes of wounded birds or dying animals,—something that spoke of a quiet, unutterable anguish.

My father had been not only a scholar, but a thinker,—one of those silent, peculiar natures whose thoughts and reasonings too often wander up and down the track of commonly received opinion, as Noah's dove of old, without finding rest for the sole of their foot. When a mind like this is approaching the confines of the eternal unknown, there is often a conflict of thought and emotion, the utterance of which to a receptive and sympathising soul might bring relief. Something there was of intense yearning and inquiry in the first glance he threw on the minister, and then it changed to one of weary languor. With the quick spiritual instincts of that last dying hour, he had seen into the soul of the man,—

that there was nothing there for him. Even the gold-headed cane was not the rod and staff for him in the dark valley.

There was, in fact, something in the tranquil, calm, unpathetic nature of that good man, which rendered him peculiarly inapt to enter into the secret chamber of souls that struggle and suffer and doubt. He had a nature so evenly balanced, his course in life had been so quiet and unruffled, his speculations and doubts had been of so philosophical and tranquil a kind, that he was not in the least fitted to become father confessor to a sick and wounded spirit.

His nature was one that inclined to certain stately formalities and proprieties; and although he had, in accordance with his station in the Congregational Church, put from him the forms of the Church of England, and was supposed to rely on the extemporaneous movements of the hour, his devotional exercises, nevertheless, had as much a stereotype form as if they had been printed in a book. We boys always knew when the time for certain familiar phrases and expressions would occur in his Sunday morning prayer, and exactly the welcome words which heralded the close of the afternoon exercise.

I remember now, as he knelt by my father's bedside, how far off and distant the usual opening formula of his prayer made the Great Helper to appear. "Supremely great, infinitely glorious, and ever-blessed God," it said, "grant that we may suitably realise the infinite distance between us, worms of the dust, and Thy divine majesty."

I was gazing earnestly at my father, as he lay with his bright, yearning, troubled eyes looking out into the misty shadows of the eternal world, and I saw him close them wearily, and open them again, with an expression of quiet endurance. The infinite distance was a thing that he

realised only too well; but who should tell him of an infinite *nearness* by which those who are far off are made nigh?

After the prayer, the minister expressed the hope that my father would be resigned to the decrees of infinite wisdom, and my father languidly assented; and then, with a ministerial benediction, the whole stately apparition of ghostly aid and comfort departed from our house.

One thing, at all events, had been gained,—my father had had the minister and been prayed with, and nobody in Oldtown could say that everything had not been properly done, according to the code of spiritual etiquette generally established. For our town, like other little places, always kept a wide-awake eye on the goings and doings of her children. Oldtown had had its own opinion of my father for a great while, and expressed it freely in tea-drinkings, quiltings, at the store, and at the tavern. If Oldtown's advice had been asked, there were a hundred things that he did which would have been left undone, and a hundred things done which he did not do. Oldtown knew just whom he ought to have married instead of marrying my mother, and was certain he could have had her too. Oldtown knew just how and when he might have made himself a rich man, and didn't. Oldtown knew exactly when, how, and why he caught the cold that set him into a consumption, and what he ought to have taken to cure it, and didn't. And now he was, so to speak, dying under a cloud, just as Oldtown always knew he would. But one thing was certain, and Oldtown was glad to hear of it,—he wasn't an infidel, as had been at different times insinuated, for he had had the minister and been prayed with; and so, though he never had joined the church, Oldtown indulged some hope of his hereafter.

When the minister was gone, my father said, with a weary smile, "There, Susy dear, I hope you are satisfied now.

My poor child," he added, gently drawing her to sit down by him, and looking at her with the strange, solemn dispassionateness of dying people, who already begin to feel that they are of another sphere,—“my poor dear little girl! You were so pretty and so gay! I did you a great wrong in marrying you.”

“Oh don't say that, Horace!” said my mother.

“It's true, though,” said my father. “With a richer and more prosperous man, you might have been blooming and happy yet. And this poor little man,” said my father, stroking my head,—“perhaps fate may have something better in store for him. If I had had but the ghost of a chance, such as some men have,—some who do not value it, who only throw it away,—I might have been something. I had it in me; but no one will ever know it now. My life is a miserable, disgusting failure. Burn all my papers, Susy. Promise me that.”

“I will do just what you say, Horace.”

“And, Susy, when I am gone, don't let all the old gossips of Oldtown come to croak and croon over me, and make their stupid remarks on my helpless body. I hate country funerals. Don't make a vulgar show of me for their staring curiosity. Death is dreary enough at best, but I never could see any sense in aggravating its horrors by stupid funeral customs. Instead of dressing me in those ghostly, unnatural grave-clothes that people seem to delight in, just let me be buried in my clothes, and let the last look my poor children have of me be as natural and familiar as possible. The last look of the dead ought to be sacred to one's friends alone. Promise now, Susy,” he said earnestly,—“promise to do as I say.”

“O Horace, I do promise! I promise to do all you say. You know I always have.”

"Yes, poor dear child, you have; you have been only too good for me."

"O Horace, how can you say so!" and my poor mother fell on my father's neck in a paroxysm of weeping.

But his great, bright eyes gathered no tears; they were fixed in an awful stillness. "My darling, you must not," he said tenderly, but with no answering emotion. "Calm yourself. And now, dear, as I am sure that to-morrow I shall not be with you, you must send for your mother to be with you to-night. You know she will come."

"Father," said I earnestly, "where are you going?"

"Where?" said he, looking at me with his clear, mournful eyes. "God knows, my son. I do not. It ought to be enough for me that God does know."

### CHAPTER III.

#### My Grandmother.

"Now, Horace," said my mother, "you must run right up to your grandfather's, and tell your grandmother to come down and stay with us to-night; and you and Bill must stay there."

Bill, my brother, was a year or two younger than I was; far more healthy, and consequently, perhaps, far more noisy. At any rate, my mother was generally only too glad to give her consent to his going anywhere of a leisure afternoon which would keep him out of the house, while I was always retained as her own special waiter and messenger.

My father had a partiality for me, because I was early an apt reader, and was fond of the quiet of his study and his books. He used to take pride and pleasure in hearing me read, which I did with more fluency and understanding than many children of twice my age; and thus it happened that,

while Bill was off roaming in the woods this sunny autumn afternoon, I was the attendant and waiter in the sick-room. My little soul was oppressed and sorrowful, and so the message that sent me to my grandmother was a very welcome one, for my grandmother was, in my view, a tower of strength and deliverance. My mother was, as I have said, a frail, mournful, little, discouraged woman; but my grandmother belonged to that tribe of strong-backed, energetic, martial mothers in Israel, who brought to our life in America the vigorous bone and muscle and hearty blood of the yeomanry of Old England. She was a valiant old soul, who fearlessly took any bull in life by the horns, and was ready to shake him into decorum.

My grandfather, a well-to-do farmer, was one of the chief magnates of the village, and carried on a large farm and certain mills at the other end of it. The great old-fashioned farmhouse where they lived was at some distance from my father's cottage, right on the banks of that brown, sparkling, clear stream I have spoken of.

My grandfather was a serene, moderate, quiet man, upward of sixty, with an affable word and a smile for everybody,—a man of easy habits, never discomposed, and never in a hurry,—who had a comfortable faith that somehow or other the affairs of this world in general, and his own in particular, will turn out all right, without much seeing to on his part.

My grandmother, on the contrary, was one of those wide-awake, earnest, active natures, whose days were hardly ever long enough for all that she felt needed to be done and attended to. She had very positive opinions on every subject, and was not at all backward in the forcible and vigorous expression of them; and evidently considering the apostolic gift of exhortation as having come straight down to her, she

failed not to use it for the benefit of all whom it might concern.

Oldtown had in many respects a peculiar sort of society. The Indian tribe that once had been settled in its vicinity, had left upon the place the tradition of a sort of wandering, gipsy, tramping life, so that there was in the town an unusual number of that roving, uncertain class of people, who are always falling into want, and needing to be helped, hanging like a tattered fringe on the thrifty and well-kept petticoat of New England society.

The traditions of tenderness, pity, and indulgence which the apostle Eliot had inwrought into the people of his day in regard to the Indians, had descended through all the families, and given to that roving people certain established rights in every household, which in those days no one ever thought of disowning. The wandering Indian was never denied a good meal, a seat by the kitchen fire, a mug of cider, and a bed in the barn. My grandfather, out of his ample apple-orchard, always made one hogshead of cider which was called the Indian hogshead, and which was known to be always on tap for them; and my grandmother not only gave them food, but more than once would provide them with blankets, and allow them to lie down and sleep by her great kitchen fire. In those days New England was such a well-watched, and schooled, and catechised community, and so innocent in the general tone of its society, that in the rural villages no one ever locked the house doors of a night. I have lain awake many a night hearing the notes of the whippoorwills and the frogs, and listening to the sighing of the breeze, as it came through the great wide-open front-door of the house, and swept up the staircase. Nobody ever thought of being afraid that the tramper whom he left asleep on the kitchen floor would rouse up in the night and rob the house. In fact,



the poor vagrants were themselves tolerably innocent, not being guilty of very many sins darker than occasional drunkenness and habitual unthrift. They were a simple, silly, jolly set of rovers, partly Indian and partly whites, who had fallen into Indian habits, who told stories, made baskets, drank cider, and raised puppies, of which they generally carried a supply in their wanderings, and from which came forth in due time an ample supply of those yellow dogs of old, one of whom was a standing member of every well-regulated New England family. Your yellow dog had an important part to act in life, as much as any of his masters. He lay in the kitchen door and barked properly at everything that went by. He went out with the children when they went roving in the woods on Saturday afternoon, and was always on hand with a sober face to patter on his four solemn paws behind the farm-waggon as it went to meeting, of a Sunday morning. And in meeting, who can say what an infinite fund of consolation their yellow honest faces and great soft eyes were to the children tired of the sermon, but greatly consoled by getting a sly opportunity to stroke Bose's yellow back! How many little eyes twinkled sympathetically through the slats of the high-backed pews, as the tick of their paws up and down the broad aisle announced that they were treating themselves to that meditative locomotion allowed to good dogs in sermon-time!

Surrounded by just such a community as I have described, my grandmother's gifts never became rusty for want of exercise. Somebody always needed straightening up and attending to. Somebody was to be exhorted, rebuked, or admonished, with all long-suffering and doctrine; and it was cheering to behold, after years of labours that had appeared to produce no very brilliant results on her disciples, how hale and vigorous her faith yet remained in the power



of talking to people. She seemed to consider that evil-doers fell into sins and evils of all sorts merely for want of somebody to talk to them, and would fly at some poor, idle, loafing, shiftless object who staggered past her house from the tavern, with the same earnestness and zeal for the fortieth time as if she had not exhorted him vainly for the thirty-nine before.

In fact, on this very Saturday afternoon, as I was coming down the hill, whence I could see the mill and farmhouse, I caught sight of her standing in the door, with cap-border erect, and vigorous gesticulation, upbraiding a poor miserable dog commonly called Uncle Eph, who stood swaying on the bridge, holding himself up by the rails with drunken gravity, only answering her expostulations by shaking his trembling fist at her, irreverently replying in every pause of her expostulation, "You—darned—old sheep you!"

"I do wonder now, mother, that you can't let Uncle Eph alone," said my Aunt Lois, who was washing up the kitchen floor behind her. "What earthly good does it do to be talking to him? He always has drank, and always will."

"I can't help it," quoth my grandmother; "it's a shame to him, and his wife lying there down with rheumatism. I don't see how folks can do so."

"And I don't see as it's any of our business," said Aunt Lois. "What is it to us? We are not our brother's keeper."

"Well, it was Cain that said that to begin with," said my grandmother; "and I think it's the spirit of Cain not to care what becomes of our neighbours!"

"I can't help it if it is. I don't see the use of fussing and caring about what you can't help. But there comes Horace Holyoke, to be sure. I suppose, mother, you're sent for;

I've been expecting it all along. Stand still there!" she called to me as I approached the door, "and don't come in to track my floor."

I stood without the door, therefore, and delivered my message; and my grandmother promptly turned into her own bedroom, adjoining the kitchen, to make herself ready to go. I stood without the door, humbly waiting Aunt Lois's permission to let me come into the house.

"Well," said Aunt Lois, "I suppose we've got to have both boys down here to-night. They've got to come here, I suppose, and we may as well have 'em first as last. It's just what I told Susy, when she would marry Horace Holyoke. I saw it just as plain as I see it now, that we should have to take care of 'em. It's aggravating, because Susy neglected her opportunities. She might have been Mrs. Captain Shawmut, and had her carriage and horses, if she'd only been a mind to."

"But," said my Aunt Keziah, who sat by the chimney, knitting,—“but if she couldn't love Captain Shawmut, and *did* love Horace Holyoke,”—

“Fiddlestick about that. Susy would 'a' loved him well enough if she'd 'a' married him. She'd 'a' loved anybody that she married well enough,—she's one of the kind; and he's turned out a very rich man, just as I told her. Susy was the only handsome one in our family, and she might have done something with herself if she'd had sense.”

“For my part,” said Aunt Keziah, “I can't blame people for following their hearts. I never saw the money yet that would 'a' tempted *me* to marry the man I didn't love.”

Poor Aunt Keziah had the reputation of being, on the whole, about the homeliest woman in Oldtown. She was fat and ill-shapen and clumsy, with a pale, greenish tinge to her complexion, watery, whitish-blue eyes, very rough thin

hair, and ragged, scrubby eyebrows. Nature had been peculiarly unkind to her; but far within her ill-favoured body she had the most exalted and romantic conceptions. She was fond of reading Young's "Night Thoughts," Mrs. Rowe's "Meditations," and Sir Charles Grandison, and always came out strong on the immaterial and sentimental side of every question. She had the most exalted ideas of a lofty, disinterested devotion, which she, poor soul! kept always simmering on a secret altar, ready to bestow on some ideal hero, if ever he should call for it. But, alas! her want of external graces prevented any such application. The princess was enchanted behind a hedge of ragged and unsightly thorns.

She had been my mother's aid and confidante in her love affair, and was therefore regarded with a suppressed displeasure by Aunt Lois, who rejoined, smartly, "I don't think, Kezzy, that you are likely to be tempted with offers of any sort; but Susy did have 'em,—plenty of 'em,—and took Horace Holyoke when she might 'a' done better. Consequence is, we've got to take her and her children home and take care of 'em. It's just our luck. Your poor folks are the ones that are sure to have children,—the less they have to give 'em, the more they have. I think, for my part, that people that can't provide for children ought not to have 'em. Susy's no more fit to bring up those boys than a white kitten. There never was a great deal to Susy," added Aunt Lois, reflectively, as, having finished the ablution of the floor, she took the dish of white sand to sand it.

"Well, for my part," said Aunt Kezzy, "I don't blame Susy a mite. Horace Holyoke was a handsome man, and the Holyokes are a good family. Why, his grandfather was a minister, and Horace certainly was a man of talents. Parson Lothrop said, if he'd 'a' had early advantages, there were

few men would have surpassed him. If he'd only been able to go to college."

"And why wasn't he able to go to college? Because he must needs get married. Now, when people set out to do a thing, I like to see 'em do it. If he'd 'a' let Susy alone and gone to college, I daresay he might have been distinguished, and all that. I wouldn't have had the least objection. But no, nothing would do but he must get married, and have two boys, and then study himself into his grave, and leave 'em to us to take care of."

"Well now, Lois," said my grandmother, coming out with her bonnet on, and her gold-headed cane in her hand, "if I were you, I wouldn't talk so. What do you always want to fight Providence for?"

"Providence!" said my Aunt Lois, with a sniff. "I don't call it Providence. I guess, if folks would behave themselves, Providence would let them alone."

"Why, everything is ordered and foreordained," said Aunt Keziah.

"Besides that," said my grandmother, setting down her stick hard on the floor, "there's no use in such talk, Lois. What's done's done; and if the Lord let it be done, we may. We can't always make people do as we would. There's no use in being dragged through the world like a dog under a cart, hanging back and yelping. What we must do, we may as well do willingly,—as well walk as be dragged. Now we've got Susy and her children to take care of, and let's do it. They've got to come here, and they shall come,—should come if there were forty-eleven more of them than there be,—so now you just shut up."

"Who said they shouldn't come?" said Aunt Lois. "I want to know now if I haven't moved out of the front room and gone into the little back chamber, and scoured up every

inch of that front-room chamber on my hands and knees, and brought down the old trundle-bed out of the garret and cleaned it up, on purpose to be all ready for Susy and those children. If I haven't worked hard for them, I 'd like to have any one tell me; and I don't see, for my part, why I should be scolded."

"She wasn't scolding you, Lois," said Aunt Keziah pacifically.

"She was, too; and I never open my mouth," said Lois, in an aggrieved tone, "that you all don't come down on me. I'm sure I don't see the harm of wishing Susy had married a man that could 'a' provided for her; but some folks feel so rich, nothing comes amiss with 'em. I suppose we are able to send both boys to college, and keep 'em like gentlemen, ar'n't we?"

My grandmother had not had the benefit of this last volley, as she prudently left the house the moment she had delivered herself of her reproof to Aunt Lois.

I was listening at the door with a troubled spirit. Gathering from the conversation that my father and mother, somehow, had been improperly conducted people, and that I and my brother Bill had no business to have been born, and that our presence on the earth was, somehow or other, of the nature of an impertinence, making everybody a vast deal of trouble. I could not bear to go in; and as I saw my grandmother's stately steppings in the distance, I ran after her as fast as my little bare feet could patter, and seized fast hold of her gown with the same feeling that makes a chicken run under a hen.

"Why, Horace," said my grandmother, "why didn't you stay down at the house?"

"I didn't want to, grandma; please let me go with you."

"You mustn't mind Aunt Lois's talk,—she means well."

I snuffled and persisted, and so had my own way, for my grandmother was as soft-hearted to children as any of the meekest of the tribe who bear that revered name; and so she didn't mind it that I slid back into the shadows of my father's room, under cover of her ample skirts, and sat down disconsolate in a dark corner.

My grandmother brought to the sick-room a heavier responsibility than any mere earthly interest could have laid on her. With all her soul, which was a very large one, she was an earnest Puritan Calvinist. She had been nourished in the sayings and traditions of the Mathers and the Eliots, and all the first generation of the saints who had possessed Massachusetts. To these she had added the earnest study of the writings of Edwards and Bellamy, and others of those brave old thinkers who had broken up the crust of formalism and mechanical piety that was rapidly forming over the New England mind.

My remembrances of her are always as a reader. In her private chamber was always a table covered with books; and though performing personally the greater share of the labours of a large family, she never failed to have her quiet hour every afternoon for reading. History and biography she delighted in, but she followed with a keen relish the mazes of theology.

During the days of my father's health and vigour, he had one of those erratic, combative minds that delight in running logical tilts against received opinions, and was skilled in finding the weak point in all assertions. My grandmother, who believed with heart and soul and life-blood everything that she believed at all, had more than once been worsted by him in arguments where her inconsiderate heat outran her logic. These remembrances had pressed heavily on her soul during the time of his sickness, and she had more than once

earnestly sought to bring him to her ways of thinking,—ways which to her view were the only possible or safe ones; but during his illness he had put such conversation from him with the quick, irritable impatience of a sore and wounded spirit.

On some natures theology operates as a subtle poison; and the New England theology in particular, with its intense clearness, its sharp-cut crystalline edges and needles of thought, has had in a peculiar degree the power of lacerating the nerves of the soul, and producing strange states of morbid horror and repulsion. The great unanswerable questions which must perplex every thinking soul that awakes to consciousness in this life are there posed with the severest and most appalling distinctness. These awful questions underlie all religions; they belong as much to Deism as to the strictest orthodoxy,—in fact, they are a part of human perception and consciousness, since it cannot be denied that Nature in her teaching is a more tremendous and inexorable Calvinist than the Cambridge Platform or any other platform that ever was invented.

But in New England society, where all poetic forms, all the draperies and accessories of religious ritual, have been rigidly and unsparingly retrenched, there was nothing between the soul and these austere and terrible problems; it was constantly and severely brought face to face with their infinite mystery. When my grandmother came into the room, it was with an evident and deep emotion working in her strong but plain features. She came up to the bed and grasped my father's hand earnestly.

"Well, mother," he said, "my time is come, and I have sent for you to put Susy and the children into your hands."

"I'll take 'em and welcome,—you know that," said my grandmother heartily.

"God bless you, mother,—I do know it," he said: "but do



have a special eye on poor little Horace. He has just my passion for books and study; and if he could be helped to get an education, he might do what I have failed to do. I leave him my books,—you will try and help him, mother?”

“Yes, my son, I will: but oh, my son, my son!” she added, with trembling eagerness, “how is it with you now? Are you prepared for this great change?”

“Mother,” he said, in a solemn voice, yet speaking with a great effort, “no sane man ever comes to my age, and to this place where I lie, without thinking a great deal on all these things. I have thought,—God knows how earnestly,—but I cannot talk of it. We see through a glass darkly here. There perhaps we shall see clearly. You must be content to leave me where I leave myself,—in the hands of my Creator. He can do no wrong.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### The Village Do-nothing.

“WALL NAOW, Horace, don't ye cry so. Why, I'm raily concerned for ye. Why, don't you s'pose your dady's better off? Why, sartin, I do. Don't cry, there's a good boy. I'll give ye my jack-knife now.”

This was addressed to me the day after my father's death, while the preparations for the funeral hung like a pall over the house, and the terror of the last cold mystery, the tears of my mother, and a sort of bustling dreariness on the part of my aunts and grandmother, all conspired to bear down on my childish nerves with fearful power. It was a doctrine of those good old times, no less than of many in our present days, that a house invaded by death should be made as forlorn as hands could make it. It should be rendered as cold and stiff, as unnatural, as dead and corpse-like as possible,



by closed shutters, looking-glasses pinned up in white sheets, and the locking up and hiding out of sight of any pleasant little familiar object which would be thought out of place in a sepulchre. This work had been driven through with unsparing vigour by Aunt Lois, who looked like one of the Fates as she remorselessly cleared away every little familiar object belonging to my father, and reduced every room to the shrouded stillness of a well-kept tomb.

Of course no one thought of looking after me. It was not the fashion of those days to think of children, if only they would take themselves off out of the way of the movements of the grown people; and so I had run out into the orchard at the back of the house, and, throwing myself down on my face under an apple-tree in the tall clover, I gave myself up to despair, and was sobbing aloud in a nervous paroxysm of agony, when these words were addressed to me. The speaker was a tall, shambling, loose-jointed man, with a long, thin visage, prominent watery blue eyes, very fluttering and seedy habiliments, who occupied the responsible position of first do-nothing-in-ordinary in our village of Oldtown, and as such I must introduce him to my reader's notice.

Every New England village, if you only think of it, must have its do-nothing as regularly as it has its school-house or meeting-house. Nature is always wide awake in the matter of compensation. Work, thrift, and industry are such an incessant steam-power in Yankee life, that society would burn itself out with intense friction were there not interposed here and there the lubricating power of a decided do-nothing,—a man who won't be hurried, and won't work, and will take his ease in his own way, in spite of the whole protest of his neighbourhood to the contrary. And there is on the face of the whole earth no do-nothing whose softness, idleness, general inaptitude to labour, and everlasting, universal shiftless-

ness can compare with that of this worthy, as found in a brisk Yankee village.

Sam Lawson filled this post with ample honour in Oldtown. He was a fellow dear to the souls of all "us boys" in the village, because, from the special nature of his position, he never had anything more pressing to do than croon and gossip with us. He was ready to spend hours in tinkering a boy's jack-knife, or mending his skate, or start at the smallest notice to watch at a woodchuck's hole, or give incessant service in tending a dog's sprained paw. He was always on hand to go fishing with us on Saturday afternoons; and I have known him to sit hour after hour on the bank, surrounded by a troop of boys, baiting our hooks and taking off our fish. He was a soft-hearted old body, and the wriggings and contortions of our prey used to disturb his repose, so that it was a regular part of his work to kill the fish by breaking their necks when he took them from the hook.

"Why, lordy massy, boys," he would say, "I can't bear to see no kind o' critter in torment. These 'ere pouts ain't to blame for bein' fish, and ye ought to put 'em out of their misery. Fish hes their rights as well as any on us."

Nobody but Sam would have thought of poking through the high grass and clover in our back lot to look me up, as I lay sobbing under the old apple-tree, the most insignificant little atom of misery that ever bewailed the inevitable.

Sam was of respectable family, and not destitute of education. He was an expert in at least five or six different kinds of handicraft, in all of which he had been pronounced by the knowing ones to be a capable workman, "if only he would stick to it." He had a blacksmith's shop, where, when the fit was on him, he would shoe a horse better than any man in the county. No one could supply a missing screw, or apply a timely brace, with more adroitness. He

could mend cracked china so as to be almost as good as new; he could use carpenter's tools as well as a born carpenter; and would doctor a rheumatic door or a shaky window better than half the professional artisans in wood. No man could put a refractory clock to rights with more ingenuity than Sam,—that is, if you would give him his time to be about it.

I shall never forget the wrath and dismay which he roused in my Aunt Lois's mind by the leisurely way in which, after having taken our own venerable kitchen clock to pieces, and strewn the fragments all over the kitchen, he would roost over it in endless incubation, telling stories, entering into long-winded theological discussions, smoking pipes, and giving histories of all the other clocks in Oldtown, with occasional memoirs of those in Needmore, the North Parish, and Podunk, as placidly indifferent to all her volleys of sarcasm and contempt, her stinging expostulations and philippics, as the sailing old moon is to the frisky, animated barking of some puppy dog of earth.

"Why, ye see, Miss Lois," he would say, "clocks can't be druv; that's jest what they can't. Some things can be druv, and then agin some things can't, and clocks is that kind. They's jest got to be humoured. Now this 'ere 's a 'mazin' good clock; give me my time on it, and I'll have it so 't will keep straight on to the Millennium."

"Millemium!" says Aunt Lois, with a snort of infinite contempt.

"Yes, the Millennium," says Sam, letting fall his work in a contemplative manner. "That 'ere 's an interestin' topic now. Parson Lothrop, he don't think the Millennium will last a thousand years. What's your 'pinion on that pint, Miss Lois?"

"My opinion is," said Aunt Lois, in her most nipping tones, "that if folks don't mind their own business, and do

with their might what their hand finds to do, the Millennium won't come at all."

"Wall, you see, Miss Lois, it's just here,—one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

"I should think you thought a day was a thousand years, the way you work," said Aunt Lois.

"Wall," says Sam, sitting down with his back to his desperate litter of wheels, weights, and pendulums, and meditatively caressing his knee as he watched the sailing clouds in abstract meditation, "ye see, ef a thing's ordained, why it's got to be, ef you don't lift a finger. That 'ere 's *so* now, ain't it?"

"Sam Lawson, you are about the most aggravating creature I ever had to do with. Here you've got our clock all to pieces, and have been keeping up a perfect hurrah's nest in our kitchen for three days, and there you sit maundering and talking with your back to your work, fussin' about the Millennium, which is none of your business, or mine, as I know of! Do either put that clock together or let it alone!"

"Don't you be a grain uneasy, Miss Lois. Why, I'll have your clock all right in the end, but I can't be druv. Wall, I guess I'll take another spell on 't to-morrow or Friday."

Poor Aunt Lois, horror-stricken, but seeing herself actually in the hands of the imperturbable enemy, now essayed the tack of conciliation. "Now do, Lawson, just finish up this job, and I'll pay you down, right on the spot; and you need the money."

"I'd like to 'blige ye, Miss Lois; but ye see money ain't everything in this world. Ef I work tew long on one thing, my mind kind o' gives out, ye see; and besides, I've got some 'sponsibilities to 'tend to. There's Mrs. Captain Brown, she made me promise to come to-day and look at the nose o' that

are silver teapot o' hern; it's kind o' sprung a leak. And then I 'greed to split a little oven-wood for the Widdah Pedee, that lives up on the Shelburn road. Must visit the widdahs in their affliction, Scriptur' says. And then there's Hepsy: she's allers a-castin' it up at me that I don't do nothing for her and the chil'en; but then, lordy massy, Hepsy ha'n't no patience. Why, jest this mornin' I was a-tellin' her to count up her marcies, and I 'clare for't if I didn't think she'd a throwed the tongs at me. That 'ere woman's temper raily makes me consarned. Wall, good day, Miss Lois. I'll be along again to-morrow or Friday, or the first o' next week." And away he went with long, loose strides down the village street, while the leisurely wail of an old fuguing tune floated back after him—

"Thy years are an  
Eternal day,  
Thy years are an  
Eternal day."

"An eternal torment," said Aunt Lois, with a snap. "I'm sure, if there's a mortal creature on this earth that I pity, it's Hepsy Lawson. Folks talk about her scolding,—that Sam Lawson is enough to make the saints in heaven fall from grace. And you can't *do* anything with him: it's like charging bayonet into a woosack."

Now, the Hepsy thus spoken of was the luckless woman whom Sam's easy temper, and a certain youthful reputation for being a capable fellow, had led years before into the snares of matrimony with him, in consequence of which she was encumbered with the bringing up of six children on very short rations. She was a gnarly, compact, efficient little pepper-box of a woman, with snapping black eyes, pale cheeks, and a mouth always at half-cock, ready to go off with some sharp crack of reproof at the shoreless, bottomless,

and tideless inefficiency of her husband. It seemed to be one of those facts of existence that she could not get used to, nor find anywhere in her brisk, fiery little body a grain of cool resignation for. Day after day she fought it with as bitter and intense a vigour, and with as much freshness of objurgation, as if it had come upon her for the first time,—just as a sharp, wiry little terrier will bark and bark from day to day, with never-ceasing pertinacity, into an empty squirrel-hole. She seemed to have no power within her to receive and assimilate the great truth that her husband was essentially, and was to be and always would be, only a do-nothing.

Poor Hepsy was herself quite as essentially a do-something,—an early-rising, bustling, driving, neat, efficient, capable little body,—who contrived, by going out to day's works,—washing, scrubbing, cleaning,—by making vests for the tailor, or closing and binding shoes for the shoemaker, by hoeing corn and potatoes in the garden at most unseasonable hours, actually to find bread to put into the mouths of the six young ravens aforesaid, and to clothe them decently. This might all do very well; but when Sam, who believed with all his heart in the modern doctrines of woman's rights so far as to have no sort of objection to Hepsy's sawing wood or hoeing potatoes if she chose, would make the small degree of decency and prosperity the family had attained by these means a text on which to preach resignation, cheerfulness, and submission, then Hepsy's last cobweb of patience gave out, and she often became, for the moment, really dangerous, so that Sam would be obliged to plunge hastily out of doors to avoid a strictly personal encounter.

It was not to be denied that poor Hepsy really was a scold, in the strong old Saxon acceptation of the word. She had fought life single-handed, tooth and nail, with all the ferocity



of outraged sensibilities, and had come out of the fight scratched and dishevelled, with few womanly graces. The good wives of the village, versed in the outs and ins of their neighbours' affairs, while they admitted that Sam was not all he should be, would sometimes roll up the whites of their eyes mysteriously, and say, "But then, poor man, what could you expect when he hasn't a happy home? Hepsy's temper is, you know," &c., &c.

The fact is, that Sam's softly easy temper and habits of miscellaneous handiness caused him to have a warm corner in most of the households. No mothers ever are very hard on a man who always pleases the children; and every one knows the welcome of a universal gossip, who carries round a district a wallet of choice bits of neighbourhood information.

Now Sam knew everything about everybody. He could tell Mrs. Major Broad just what Lady Lothrop gave for her best parlour carpet, that was brought over from England, and just on what occasions she used the big silver tankard, and on what they were content with the little one, and how many pairs of long silk stockings the minister had, and how many rows of stitching there were on the shoulders of his Sunday shirts. He knew just all that was in Deacon Badger's best room, and how many silver table-spoons and tea-spoons graced the beaufet in the corner; and when each of his daughters was born, and just how Miss Susy came to marry as she did, and who wanted to marry her and couldn't. He knew just the cost of Major Broad's scarlet cloak and shoe-buckles, and how Mrs. Major had a real *Ingv* shawl up in her "camphire" trunk, that cost nigh as much as Lady Lothrop's. Nobody had made love, or married, or had children born, or been buried, since Sam was able to perambulate the country, without his informing himself minutely of every available

particular; and his unfathomable knowledge on these subjects was an unfailing source of popularity.

Besides this, Sam was endowed with no end of idle accomplishments. His indolence was precisely of a turn that enjoyed the excitement of an occasional odd bit of work with which he had clearly no concern, and which had no sort of tendency toward his own support or that of his family. Something so far out of the line of practical utility as to be in a manner an artistic labour would awaken all the energies of his soul. His shop was a perfect infirmary for decayed articles of *virtu* from all the houses for miles around. Cracked china, lame teapots, broken shoe-buckles, rickety tongs, and decrepit fire-irons, all stood in melancholy proximity, awaiting Sam's happy hours of inspiration, and he was always happy to sit down and have a long, strictly confidential conversation concerning any of these with the owner, especially if Hepsy were gone out washing, or on any other work which kept her at a safe distance.

Sam could shave and cut hair as neatly as any barber, and was always in demand up and down the country to render these offices to the sick. He was ready to go for miles to watch with invalids, and a very acceptable watcher he made, beguiling the night hours with endless stories and legends. He was also an expert in psalmody, having in his youth been the pride of the village singing-school. In those days he could perform reputably on the bass-viol in the choir of a Sunday with a dolefulness and solemnity of demeanour in the highest degree edifying,—though he was equally ready of a week-evening in scraping on a brisk little fiddle, if any of the thoughtless ones wanted a performer at a husking or a quilting frolic. Sam's obligingness was many-sided, and he was equally prepared at any moment to raise a funeral psalm or whistle the time of a double-shuffle.



But the more particular delight of Sam's heart was in funerals. He would walk miles on hearing the news of a dangerous illness, and sit roosting on the fence of the premises, delighted to gossip over the particulars, but ready to come down at any moment to do any of the odd turns which sickness in a family makes necessary; and when the last earthly scene was over, Sam was more than ready to render those final offices from which the more nervous and fastidious shrink, but in which he took almost a professional pride.

The business of an undertaker is a refinement of modern civilisation. In simple old days neighbours fell into one another's hands for all the last wants of our poor mortality; and there were men and women of note who took a particular and solemn pride in these mournful offices. Sam had in fact been up all night in our house, and having set me up in the clover, and comforted me with a jack-knife, he proceeded to inform me of the particulars.

"Why, ye see, Horace, I ben up with 'em pretty much all night; and I laid yer father out myself, and I never see a better-lookin' corpse. It's a 'mazin' pity your daddy hed such feelin's 'bout havin' people come to look at him, 'cause he does look beautiful, and it's been a long time since we've hed a funeral, anyway, and everybody was expectin' to come to his'n, and they'll all be dissipated if the corpse ain't show'd; but then, lordy massy, folks oughtn't to think hard on't ef folks hes their own way 'bout their own funeral. That 'ere's what I've been a-tellin' on 'em all, over to the tavern and round to the store. Why, you never see such a talk as there was about it. There was Aunt Sally Morse, and Betsey and Patsy Sawin, and Mis' Zeruiah Bacon, come over early to look at the corpse, and when they wasn't let in, you never heerd sich a jawin'. Betsey and Patsy Sawin said that they

allers suspected your father was an infidel, or some sich, and now they was clear; and Aunt Sally, she asked who made his shroud, and when she heerd there wasn't to be none, he was laid out in his clothes, she said she never heerd such unchristian doin's,—that she always had heerd he had strange opinions, but she never thought it would come to that."

"My father isn't an infidel, and I wish I could kill 'em for talking so," said I, clenching my jack-knife in my small fist, and feeling myself shake with passion.

"Wal, wal, I kind o' spoke up to 'em about it. I wasn't a-goin' to hear no sich jaw; and says I, 'I think ef there is anybody that knows what's what about funerals I'm the man, fur I don't s'pose there's a man in the county that's laid out more folks, and set up with more corpses, and ben sent for fur and near, than I have, and my opinion is, that mourners must always follow the last directions gi'n to 'em by the person. Ef a man hasn't a right to have the say about his own body, what hes he a right to?' Wal, they said that it was putty well of me to talk so, when I had the privilege of sittin' up with him, and seein' all that was to be seen. 'Lordy massy,' says I, 'I don't see why ye need envi me; 'tain't my fault that folks thinks it's agreeable to have me round. As to bein' buried in his clothes, why, lordy massy, 'tain't nothin' so extraordinary. In the old country great folks is very often laid out in their clothes. 'Member, when I was a boy, old Mr. Sanger, the minister in Deerbrook, was laid out in his gown and bands, with a Bible in his hands, and he looked as nateral as a pictur. I was at Parson Rider's funeral, down to Wrentham. He was laid out in white flannel. But then there was old Captain Bigelow, down to the Pint there, he was laid out regular in his rigimentals, jest as he wore 'em in the war, epaulets and all.' Wal now, Horace, your daddy looks jest as peaceful as a psalm-tune. Now, you don't

know,—jest as nateral as if he'd only jest gone to sleep. So ye may set your heart at rest 'bout him."

It was one of those beautiful serene days of October, when the earth lies as bright and still as anything one can dream of in the New Jerusalem, and Sam's homely expressions of sympathy had quieted me somewhat. Sam, tired of his discourse, lay back in the clover, with his hands under his head, and went on with his moralising.

"Lordy massy, Horace! to think on't,—it's so kind o' solemnizin'! It's one's turn to-day, and another's to-morrow. We never know when our turn'll come." And Sam raised a favourite stave,—

" 'And must these active limbs of mine  
Lie moulderin' in the clay? ' "

"Active limbs! I guess so!" said a sharp voice, which came through the clover-heads like the crack of a rifle. "Well, I've found you at last. Here you be, Sam Lawson, lyin' flat on your back at eleven o'clock in the morning, and not a potato dug, and not a stick of wood cut to get dinner with; and I won't cut no more if we never have dinner. It's no use a humourin' you,—doin' your work for you. The more I do, the more I may do; so come home, won't you?"

"Lordy massy, Hepsy!" said Sam, slowly erecting himself out of the grass, and staring at her with white eyes, "you don't ought to talk so. I ain't to blame. I hed to sit up with Mr. Holyoke all night, and help 'em lay him out at four o'clock this mornin'."

"You're always everywhere but where you've business to be," said Hepsy, "and helpin' and doin' for everybody but your own. For my part, I think charity ought to begin at home. You're everywhere, up and down and round,—over to Shelbun, down to Podunk, up to North Parish; and here

Abram and Kiah Stebbins have been waitin' all the morning with a horse they brought all the way from Boston to get you to shoe."

"Wal now, that 'ere shows they know what's what. I told Kiah that ef they'd bring that 'ere hoss to me I'd tend to his huffs."

"And be off lying in the mowing, like a patridge, when they come after ye. That's one way to do business," said Hepsy.

"Hepsy, I was just a miditatin'. Ef we don't miditate sometimes on all these 'ere things, it'll be wus for us by and by."

"Meditate! I'll help your meditations in a way you won't like, if you don't look out. So now you come home, and stop your meditatin', and go to doin' somethin'. I told 'em to come back this afternoon, and I'd have you on the spot if 'twas a possible thing," said the very practical Hepsy, laying firm hold of Sam's unresisting arm, and leading him away captive.

I stole into the darkened, silent room where my father had lain so long. Its desolate neatness struck a chill to my heart. Not even a bottle remained of the many familiar ones that used to cover the stand and the mantel-piece: but he, lying in his threadbare Sunday coat, looked to me as I had often seen him in later days, when he came from school exhausted, and had fallen asleep on the bed. I crept to his side and nestled down on the floor as quietly as a dog lies down by the side of his master.

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## CHAPTER V.

## The Old Meeting-house.

THE next day was the funeral, and I have little remembrance in it of anything but what was dreary. Our Puritan ancestors, in the decision of their reaction from a dead formalism, had swept away from the solemn crisis of life every symbolic expression; and this severe bareness and rigid restriction were nowhere more striking than in funeral services, as conducted in these early times in Massachusetts.

There was at the house of mourning simply a prayer, nothing more; and then the procession of relatives, friends, and towns-people walked silently to the grave, where, without text, prayer, or hymn, the dust was for ever given to its fellow-dust. The heavy thud of the clods on the coffin, the rattling of spades, and the fall of the earth, were the only voices that spoke in that final scene. Yet that austere stillness was not without its majesty, since it might be interpreted, not as the silence of indifference, but as the stillness of those whose thoughts are too mighty for words. It was the silence of the unutterable. From the grave my mother and her two boys were conducted to my grandfather's house,—the asylum ever ready for the widowed daughter.

The next day after was Sunday, and a Sunday full of importance in the view of Aunt Lois, Aunt Keziah, and, in fact, of every one in the family. It was the custom, on the first Sabbath after a bereavement, for the whole family circle to be present together in church, to request in a formal note, the prayers of the congregation that the recent death might be sanctified to them. It was a point of honour for all family connexions to be present at this service, even though they should not attend the funeral; and my Uncle Bill, a young

Sophomore in Cambridge College, had come down duly to be with us on the occasion. He was a joyous, spirited, jolly, rollicking young fellow, not in the slightest degree given to funereal reflections, and his presence in the house always brought a certain busy cheerfulness which I felt to lighten my darkness.

One thing certainly had a tendency in that direction, which was that Aunt Lois was always perceptibly ameliorated by Uncle Bill's presence. Her sharp, spare features wore a relaxed and smiling aspect, her eyes had a softer light, and she belied her own frequent disclaimer, that she never had any beauty, by looking almost handsome.

Poor Aunt Lois! I am afraid my reader will not do justice to her worth by the specimens of her ways and words which I have given. Any one that has ever pricked his fingers in trying to force open a chestnut-burr may perhaps have moralised at the satin lining, so smooth and soft, that lies inside of that sharpness. It is an emblem of a kind of nature very frequent in New England, where the best and kindest and most desirable of traits are enveloped in an outside wrapping of sharp austerity.

No person rendered more deeds of kindness in the family and neighbourhood than Aunt Lois. She indeed bore the cares of the whole family on her heart; she watched and prayed and fretted and scolded for all. Had she cared less, she might perhaps have appeared more amiable. She *invested* herself, so to speak, in others; and it was vital to her happiness, not only that they should be happy, but that they should be happy precisely on her pattern and in her way. She had drawn out the whole family chart, and if she had only had power to make each one walk tractably in the path she foreordained, her sharp, thin face might have had a few less wrinkles. It seemed to her so perfectly evident that the

ways she fixed upon for each one were ways of pleasantness and paths of peace, that she scarcely could have patience with Providence for allowing things to fall out in a way so entirely different from her designs.

Aunt Lois was a good Christian, but she made that particular mistake in repeating the Lord's Prayer which so many of us quite unconsciously do,—she always said, *My* will be done, instead of *Thy* will. Not in so many words, of course,—it was the secret inner voice of her essential nature that spoke and said one thing, while her tongue said another. But then who can be sure enough of himself in this matter, to cast the first stone at Aunt Lois?

It was the fashion of the Calvinistic preaching of that time to put the doctrine of absolute and unconditional submission to God in the most appalling forms, and to exercise the conscience with most severe supposititious tests. After many struggles and real agonies, Aunt Lois had brought herself to believe that she would be willing to resign her eternal salvation to the Divine glory; that she could consent to the eternal perdition of those on whom her heart was most particularly set, were it God's will; and thus her self-will, as she supposed, had been entirely annihilated, whereas it was only doubled back on itself, and ready to come out with tenfold intensity in the unsuspected little things of this life, where she looked less at Divine agency than human instrumentality. No law, as she supposed, required her to submit to people's acting foolishly in their worldly matters, particularly when she was able and willing to show them precisely how they ought to act.

Failing of a prosperous marriage for my mother, Aunt Lois's heart was next set upon a college education for my Uncle Bill, the youngest and brightest of the family. For



this she toiled and economised, in family labour, and eked it out by vest-making at the tailor's, and by shoe-binding at the shoemaker's,—all that she might have something to give to Bill for spending-money, to keep up his standing respectably in college. Her antagonistic attitude toward my brother and myself proceeded less from hardness of heart than from an anxious, worrying fear that we should trench on the funds that at present were so heavily taxed to bring Uncle Bill through college. Especially did she fear that my father had left me the legacy of his own ungratified desire for an education, and that my grandmother's indulgence and bountifulness might lead her to encourage me in some such expectations, and then where was the money to come from? Aunt Lois foresaw contingencies afar off. Not content with the cares of the present day and hour, she dived far into the future, and carried all sorts of imaginary loads that would come in supposable cases. As the Christian by the eye of faith sees all sorts of possible good along the path of future duty, so she by the eye of cautiousness saw every possible future evil that could arise in every supposable contingency. Aunt Lois's friends often had particular reason to wish that she cared less for them, for then, perhaps, she might give them some peace. But nothing is so hopeless as your worthy domestic house-dog, every hair of whose fur bristles with watchfulness, and who barks at you incessantly from behind a most terrible entrenchment of faithful labours and loving-kindnesses heaped up on your behalf.

These dear good souls who wear their life out for you, have they not a right to scold you, and dictate to you, and tie up your liberty, and make your life a burden to you? If they have not, who has? If you complain, you break their worthy old hearts. They insist on the privilege of seeking your happiness by thwarting you in everything you want to



do, and putting their will instead of yours in every step of your life.

Between Aunt Lois and my father there had been that constant antagonism which is often perceptible between two human beings, each good enough in himself, but of a quality to act destructively upon the other. A satin vest and a nutmeg-grater are both perfectly harmless, and even worthy existences, but their close proximity on a jolting journey is not to be recommended.

My father never could bear my Aunt Lois in his house; and her presence had such an instant effect in developing all the combative element in him, that really the poor woman never saw him long enough under an agreeable aspect to enable her even to understand why my mother should regard him with affection; and it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that she was not a deep mourner at his death. She regarded her sister's love for my father as an unfortunate infatuation, and was more satisfied with the ways of Providence than she usually was, when its object was withdrawn.

It was according to all the laws of moral gravitation that, as soon as my father died, my mother became an obedient satellite in Aunt Lois's orbit. She was one of those dear, helpless little women, who, like flowers by the wayside, seem to be at the disposal of the first strong hand that wants to gather them. She was made to be ruled over; and so we all felt this first Sunday morning that we had come home to be under the dominion of Aunt Lois. She put on my mother's mourning-bonnet and tied it under her meek, unresisting chin, turning her round and round to get views of her from different points, and arranging her ribbons and veil and pins as if she had been a lay figure going to exhibition; and then she tied our collars, and gave a final twitch to our jackets, and warned us not to pull out the pins from the crape bands

on our new hats, nor to talk and look round in meeting, strengthening the caution with, "Just so sure as you do, there's Mr. Israel Scran, the tithing-man, will come and take you and set you on the pulpit-stairs."

Now Mr. Israel Scran on week-days was a rather jolly, secular-looking individual, who sat on the top of a barrel in his store, and told good stories; but Israel Scran on Sundays was a tithing-man, whose eyes were supposed to be as a flame of fire to search out little boys that played in meeting, and bring them to awful retribution. And I must say that I shook in my shoes at the very idea of his entering into judgment with me for any misdemeanour.

Going to church on the present occasion was rather a severe and awful ceremony to my childish mind, second only to the dreary horror of the time when we stood so dreadfully still around the grave, and heard those heavy clods thud upon the coffin. I ventured a timid inquiry of my mother as to what was going to be done there.

Aunt Lois took the word out of her mouth. "Now, Horace, hush your talk, and don't worry your mother. She's going to put up a note to be prayed for to-day, and we are all going to join; so you be a good boy, and don't talk."

Being good was so frequently in those days represented to me as synonymous with keeping silence, that I screwed my little mouth up firmly as I walked along to the meeting-house, behind my mother, holding my brother Bill's hand, and spoke not a word, though he made several overtures towards conversation by informing me that he saw a chipmunk, and that if it was only Monday he'd hit him smack; and also telling me that Sam Lawson had promised to go pout-fishing with us on Tuesday, with other boy temporalities of a nature equally worldly.

The meeting-house to which our steps were tending was

one of those huge, shapeless, barn-like structures, which our fathers erected apparently as a part of that well-arranged system by which they avoided all resemblance to those fair, poetic ecclesiastical forms of the Old World, which seemed in their view as "garments spotted by the flesh."

The interior of it was revealed by the light of two staring rows of windows, which let in the glare of the summer sun, and which were so loosely framed, that, in wintry and windy weather, they rattled and shook, and poured in a perfect whirlwind of cold air, which disported itself over the shivering audience.

It was a part of the theory of the times never to warm these buildings by a fire; and the legend runs that once in our meeting-house the communion was administered under a temperature which actually froze the sacred elements while they were being distributed. Many a remembrance of winter sessions in that old meeting-house rose to my mind, in which I sat with my poor dangling feet perfectly numb and paralysed with cold, and blew my finger-ends to keep a little warmth in them, and yet I never thought of complaining; for everybody was there,—mother, aunts, grandmother, and all the town,—we all sat and took our hardships in common, as a plain necessary fact of existence.

Going to meeting, in that state of society into which I was born, was as necessary and inevitable a consequence of waking up on Sunday morning as eating one's breakfast. Nobody thought of staying away,—and, for that matter, nobody wanted to stay away. Our weekly life was simple, monotonous, and laborious; and the chance of seeing the whole neighbourhood together in their best clothes on Sunday was a thing which, in the dearth of all other sources of amusement, appealed to the idlest and most unspiritual of loafers. They who did not care for the sermon or the prayers wanted to see

Major Broad's scarlet coat and laced ruffles, and his wife's brocade dress, and the new bonnet which Lady Lothrop had just had sent up from Boston. Whoever had not seen these would be out of society for a week to come, and not be able to converse understandingly on the topics of the day.

The meeting on Sunday united in those days, as nearly as possible, the whole population of a town,—men, women, and children. There was then in a village but one fold and one shepherd, and long habit had made the tendency to this one central point so much a necessity to every one, that to stay away from "meetin'," for any reason whatever, was always a secret source of uneasiness. I remember in my early days, sometimes when I had been left at home by reason of some of the transient ailments of childhood, how ghostly and supernatural the stillness of the whole house and village outside the meeting-house used to appear to me, how loudly the clock ticked and the flies buzzed down the window-pane, and how I listened in the breathless stillness to the distant psalm-singing, the solemn tones of the long prayer, and then to the monotone of the sermon, and then again to the closing echoes of the last hymn, and thought sadly, what if some day I should be left out, when all my relations and friends had gone to meeting in the New Jerusalem, and hear afar the music from the crystal walls!

As our Sunday gathering at meeting was a complete picture of the population of our village, I shall, as near as possible, daguerreotype our Sunday audience, as the best means of placing my readers in sympathy with the scene and actors of this history.

The arrangement of our house of worship in Oldtown was somewhat peculiar, owing to the fact of its having originally been built as a mission-church for the Indians. The central portion of the house, usually appropriated to the best pews,

was in ours devoted to them; and here were arranged benches of the simplest and most primitive form, on which were collected every Sunday the thin and wasted remnants of what once was a numerous and powerful tribe. There were four or five respectable Indian families, who owned comfortable farms in the neighbourhood, and came to meeting in their farm-waggons, like any of their white neighbours.

Conspicuous among these, on the front bench, facing the pulpit, sat the Indian head-magistrate, Justice Waban,—tall and erect as an old pine-tree, and of a grave and reverend aspect. Next to him was seated the ecclesiastical superior of that portion of the congregation, Deacon Ephraim. Mild, intelligent, and devout, he was the perfect model of the praying Indian formed in the apostolic traditions of the good Eliot. By his side sat his wife, Keturah, who, though she had received Christian baptism, still retained in most respects the wild instincts and untamed passions of the savage. Though she attended church and allowed her children to be baptized, yet, in spite of minister, elder, and tithing-man, she obstinately held on to the practice of many of her old heathen superstitions.

Old Keturah was one of the wonders of my childhood. She was spoken of among the gossips with a degree of awe, as one who possessed more knowledge than was good for her; and in thunder-storms and other convulsions of nature, she would sit in her chimney-corner and chant her old Indian incantations, to my mingled terror and delight. I remember distinctly three syllables that occurred very often,—“ah-mah-ga, ah-mah-ga,”—sometimes pronounced in wild, plaintive tones, and sometimes in tones of menace and denunciation. In fact, a century before, Keturah must have had a hard time of it with her Christian neighbours; but our minister

was a gentleman and a scholar, and only smiled benignly when certain elderly ladies brought him terrible stories of Keturah's proceedings.

Next to Keturah was seated Deborah Kummacher, an Indian woman, who had wisely forsaken the unprofitable gods of the wild forest, and taken to the Christian occupation of fruit-growing, and kept in nice order a fruit-farm near my grandfather's, where we children delighted to resort in the season, receiving from her presents of cherries, pears, peaches, or sweet apples, which, she informed us, she was always ready to give to good children who said their prayers and made their manners when they came into her house. Next behind her came Betty Poganut, Patty Pegan, and old Sarah Wonsamug,—hard-visaged, high-cheek-boned females, with snaky-black eyes, principally remarkable, in my mind, for the quantity of cider they could drink. I had special reason to remember this, as my grandmother's house was their favourite resort, and drawing cider was always the work of the youngest boy.

Then there was Lem Sudock, a great, coarse, heavy-moulded Indian, with gigantic limbs and a savage face, but much in request for laying stone walls, digging wells, and other tasks for which mere physical strength was the chief requisite. Beside him was Dick Obscure, a dull, leering, lazy, drinking old fellow, always as dry as an empty sponge, but with an endless capacity for imbibing. Dick was of a class which our modern civilisation would never see inside of a church, though he was in his seat in our meeting-house as regularly as any of the deacons; but on week-days his principal employment seemed to be to perambulate the country, making stations of all the kitchen firesides, where he would tell stories, drink cider, and moralise, till the patience or cider-pitchers of his hosts ran dry, when he would rise up slowly, adjust his old straw hat, hitch up his dangling nether gar-



ments a little tighter, and with a patronising nod, say, "Wal, naow, 'f you can spare me, I'll go."

Besides our Indian population, we had also a few negroes, and a side gallery was appropriated to them. Prominent there was the stately form of old Boston Foodah, an African prince, who had been stolen from the coast of Guinea in early youth, and sold in Boston at some period of antiquity whereto the memory of man runneth not. All the Oldtown people, and their fathers and grandfathers, remembered old Boston just as he then existed, neither older nor younger. He was of a majestic stature, slender and proudly erect, and perfectly graceful in every movement, his woolly hair as white as the driven snow. He was servant to General Hull in the Revolutionary war, and at its close was presented by his master with a full suit of his military equipments, including three-cornered hat, with plume, epaulets, and sword. Three times a year,—at the spring training, the full muster, and on Thanksgiving-day,—Boston arrayed himself in full panoply, and walked forth a really striking and magnificent object. In the eyes of us boys, on these days, he was a hero, and he patronised us with a condescension which went to our hearts. His wife, Jinny, was a fat, roly-poly little body, delighting in red and yellow bonnets, who duly mustered into meeting a troop of black-eyed, fat, woolly-headed little negroes, whom she cuffed and disciplined during sermon-time with a matronly ferocity designed to show white folks that she was in earnest in their religious training.

Near by was old Primus King, a gigantic retired whaleman, black as coal, with enormous hands and feet, universally in demand in all the region about as assistant in butchering operations.

Besides these, let me not forget dear, jolly old Cæsar, my grandfather's own negro, the most joyous creature on two

feet. What could not Cæsar do? He could gobble like a turkey so perfectly as to deceive the most experienced old gobbler on the farm; he could crow so like a cock that all the cocks in the neighbourhood would reply to him; he could mew like a cat, and bark like a dog; he could sing and fiddle, and dance the double-shuffle, and was *au fait* in all manner of jigs and hornpipes; and one need not wonder, therefore, that old Cæsar was hugged and caressed and lauded by me in my childhood as the most wonderful of men.

There were several other coloured families, of less repute, who also found seats in the negro gallery. One of them was that of Aunt Nancy Prime, famous for making election-cake and ginger-pop, and who was sent for at all the great houses on occasions of high festivity, as learned in all mysteries relating to the confection of cakes and pies. A tight, trig, bustling body she, black and polished as ebony, smooth-spoken and respectful, and quite a favourite with everybody. Nancy had treated herself to an expensive luxury in the shape of a husband,—an idle, worthless mulatto man, who was owned as a slave in Boston. Nancy bought him by intense labours in spinning flax, but found him an undesirable acquisition, and was often heard to declare, in the bitterness of her soul, when he returned from his drinking bouts, that she should never buy another nigger, she knew.

The only thing she gained by this matrimonial speculation was an abundant crop of noisy children, who, as she often declared, nearly wore the life out of her. I remember once, when I was on a visit to her cottage, while I sat regaling myself with a slice of cake, Nancy lifted the trap-door, which went down into the cellar below. Forthwith the whole skirmishing tribe of little darkies, who had been rolling about the floor, seemed suddenly to unite in one coil, and with a final flop, disappeared in the hole. Nancy gave a kick to the



door, and down it went; when she exclaimed, with a sigh of exhausted patience, "Well, now, then, I hope you'll be still a minute, anyway!"

The houses of the coloured people formed a little settlement by themselves in the north part of the village, where they lived on most amicable terms with all the inhabitants.

In the front gallery of the meeting-house, opposite the pulpit, was seated the choir of the church. The leader of our music was old Mump Morse, a giant of a man, in form not unlike a cider-hogshead, with a great round yellow head, and a voice like the rush of mighty winds, who was wont to boast that he could chord with thunder and lightning better than any man in the parish. Next to him came our friend Sam Lawson, whose distinguishing peculiarity it was, that he could strike into any part where his voice seemed most needed; and he often showed the miscellaneous nature of his accomplishments by appearing as tenor, treble, or counter, successively, during the rendering of one psalm. If we consider that he also pitched the tunes with his pitch-pipe, and played on his bass-viol, we shall see increasing evidence of that versatility of genius for which he was distinguished.

Another principal bass-singer was old Joe Stedman, who asserted his democratic right to do just as he had a mind to by always appearing every Sunday in a clean leather apron of precisely the form he wore about his weekly work. Of course all the well-conducted upper classes were scandalised, and Joe was privately admonished of the impropriety, which greatly increased his satisfaction, and caused him to regard himself as a person of vast importance. It was reported that the minister had told him that there was more pride in his leather apron than in Captain Browne's scarlet cloak; but Joe settled the matter by declaring that the apron was a

matter of conscience with him, and of course after that there was no more to be said.

These leading characters, with a train of young men and maidens who practised in the weekly singing-school, used to conduct the musical devout exercises much to their own satisfaction, if not always to that of our higher circle.

And now, having taken my readers through the lower classes in our meeting-house, I must, in order of climax, represent to them our higher orders.

Social position was a thing in those days marked by lines whose precision and distinctness had not been blurred by the rough handling of democracy. Massachusetts was, in regard to the aroma and atmosphere of her early days, an aristocratic community. The seeds of democratic social equality lay as yet ungerminated in her soil. The state was a garden laid out with the old formal parallelograms and clipped hedges of princely courts and titled ranks, but sown with seeds of a new and rampant quality, which were destined to overgrow them all.

Even our little town had its court circle, its House of Lords and House of Commons, with all the etiquette and solemn observances thereto appertaining. At the head stood the minister and his wife, whose rank was expressed by the pew next the pulpit. Then came Captain Browne, a retired English merchant and shipowner, who was reported to have ballasted himself with a substantial weight of worldly substance. Captain Browne was a tall, upright, florid man, a little on the shady side of time, but carrying his age with a cheerful greenness. His long, powdered locks hung in a well-tended queue down his back, and he wore a scarlet coat, with a white vest and stock, and small-clothes, while long silk stockings with knee and shoe-buckles of the best paste, sparkling like real diamonds, completed his attire.

His wife rustled by his side in brocade which might almost stand alone for stiffness, propped upon heels that gave a majestic altitude to her tall, thin figure.

Next came the pew of Miss Mehitable Rosseter, who, in right of being the only surviving member of the family of the former minister, was looked upon with reverence in Oldtown, and took rank decidedly in the Upper House, although a very restricted and limited income was expressed in the quality of her attire. Her Sunday suit in every article spoke of ages past, rather than of the present hour. Her laces were darned, though still they were laces; her satin gown had been turned and made over, till every possible capability of it was exhausted; and her one Sunday bonnet exhibited a power of coming out in fresh forms, with each revolving season, that was quite remarkable, particularly as each change was somewhat odder than the last. But still, as everybody knew that it was Miss Mehitable Rosseter, and no meaner person, her queer bonnets and dyed gowns were accepted as a part of those inexplicable dispensations of the Providence that watches over the higher classes, which are to be received by faith alone.

In the same pew with Miss Mehitable sat Squire Jones, once, in days of colonial rule, rejoicing in the dignity of Sheriff of the county. During the years of the Revolutionary war, he had mysteriously vanished from view, as many good Tories did; but now that the new social status was well established, he suddenly reappeared in the neighbourhood, and took his place as an orderly citizen, unchallenged and unquestioned. It was enough that the Upper House received him. The minister gave him his hand, and Lady Lothrop courtesied to him, and called on his wife, and that, of course, settled the manner in which the parish were to behave; and, like an obedient flock, they all jumped the

fence after their shepherd. Squire Jones, besides, was a well-formed, well-dressed man, who lived in a handsome style, and came to meeting in his own carriage; and these are social virtues not to be disregarded in any well-regulated community.

There were certain well-established ranks and orders in social position in Oldtown, which it is important that I should distinctly define. People who wore ruffles round their hands, and rode in their own coaches, and never performed any manual labour, might be said to constitute in Oldtown our House of Lords,—and they might all have been counted on two or three of my fingers. It was, in fact, confined to the personages already enumerated. There were the minister, Captain Browne, and Sheriff Jones.

But below these, yet associating with them on terms of strict equality, were a more numerous body of Commons—men of substance and influence, but who tilled the earth with their own hands, or pursued some other active industrial calling.

Distinguished among these, sitting in the next pew to the Sheriff, was Major Broad, a practical farmer, who owned a large and thriving farm of the best New England type, and presented that true blending of the labouring man and the gentleman which is nowhere else found. He had received his military rank for meritorious services in the late Revolutionary war, and he came back to his native village with that indefinable improvement in air and manner which is given by the habits of military life. With us he owed great prestige to a certain personal resemblance to General Washington which he was asserted to have by one of our townsmen, who had often seen him and the General on the same field, and who sent the word abroad in the town that whoever wanted to know how General Washington looked

had only to look upon Major Broad. The Major was too much of a real man to betray the slightest consciousness of this advantage, but it invested him with an air of indefinable dignity in the eyes of all his neighbours, especially those of the lower ranks.

Next came my grandfather's family pew; and in our Old-town House of Commons I should say that none stood higher than he. In his Sunday suit my grandfather was quite a well-made, handsome man. His face was marked by grave, shrewd reflection, and a certain gentle cast of humour, which rarely revealed itself even in a positive smile, and yet often made me feel as if he were quietly and interiorly smiling at his own thoughts. His well-brushed Sunday coat and small-clothes, his bright knee and shoe-buckles, his long silk stockings, were all arranged with a trim neatness refreshing to behold. His hair, instead of being concealed by a wig, or powdered and tied in a queue, after the manner of the aristocracy, fell in long curls on his shoulders, and was a not unbecoming silvery frame to the placid picture of his face. He was a man by nature silent and retiring, indisposed to anything like hurry or tumult, rather easy and generously free in his business habits, and quietly sanguine in his expectations. In point of material possessions he was reputed well to do, as he owned a large farm and two mills, and conducted the business thereof with a quiet easiness which was often exceedingly provoking to my grandmother and Aunt Lois. No man was more popular in the neighbourhood, and the confidence of his fellow-townsmen was yearly expressed in town-meeting by his reappointment to every office of trust which he could be induced to accept. He was justice of the peace, deacon of the church, selectman, —in short, enjoyed every spiritual and temporal office by the bestowal of which his fellowmen could express con-

fidence in him. This present year, indeed, he bore the office of tithing-man in association with Mr. Israel Scran. It had been thought that it would be a good thing, in order to check the increasing thoughtlessness of the rising generation in regard to Sunday-keeping, to enlist in this office an authority so much respected as Deacon Badger; but the manner in which he performed its duties was not edifying to the minds of strictly-disposed people. The Deacon in his official capacity was expected to stalk forth at once as a terror to evil-doers, whereas he seemed to have no capacity for terrifying anybody. When a busy individual informed him that this or that young person was to be seen walking out in the fields, or picking flowers in their gardens of a Sabbath afternoon, the Deacon always placidly answered that he hadn't seen them; from which the ill-disposed would infer that he looked another way, of set purpose, and the quiet internal smile that always illuminated the Deacon's face gave but too much colour to this idea.

In those days the great war of theology which has always divided New England was rife, and every man was marked and ruled as to his opinions, and the theologic lines passed even through the conjugal relation, which often, like everything else, had its Calvinistic and its Arminian side.

My grandfather was an Arminian, while my grandmother was, as I have said, an earnest, ardent Calvinist. Many were the controversies I have overheard between them, in which the texts of Scripture flew thick and fast, until my grandfather at last would shut himself up in that final fortress of calm and smiling silence which is so provoking to feminine ardour. There entrenched, he would look out upon his assailants with a quiet imperturbable good-humour which quite drove them to despair.

It was a mystery to my grandmother how a good man, as



she knew my grandfather to be, *could* remain years unmoved in the very hearing of such unanswerable arguments as she had a thousand times brought up, and still, in the very evening of his days, go on laying his serene old head on an Arminian pillow! My grandfather was a specimen of that class of men who can walk amid the opinions of their day, encircled by a halo of serene and smiling individuality which quarrels with nobody, and without shocking any one's prejudices, preserves intact the liberty of individual dissent. He silently went on thinking and doing exactly as he pleased, and yet was always spoken of as the *good* Deacon. His calm, serene, benignant figure was a sort of benediction as he sat in his pew of a Sunday; and if he did not see the little boys that played, or seeing them, only smilingly brought them to a sense of duty by passing them a head of fennel through the slats of the pews, still Deacon Badger was reckoned about the best man in the world.

By the side of my grandfather sat his eldest born, Uncle Jacob, a hale, thrifty young farmer, who, with his equally hale and thrifty wife, was settled on a well-kept farm at some distance from ours. Uncle Jacob was a genuine son of the soil, whose cheeks were ruddy as clover, and teeth as white as new milk. He had grown up on a farm, as quietly as a tree grows, and had never been ten miles from his birthplace. He was silent, contented, and industrious. He was in his place to be prayed for as one of a bereaved family, of course, this morning; but there was scarcely more capability of mourning in his plump, healthy body than there is in that of a well-fed, tranquil steer. But he took his weekly portion of religion kindly. It was the thing to do on Sunday, as much as making hay or digging potatoes on Monday. His wife by his side displayed no less the aspect of calm, respectable, well-to-do content. Her Sunday bonnet was without

spot, her Sunday gown without wrinkle; and she had a great bunch of fennel in her pocket-handkerchief, which, from time to time, she imparted to us youngsters with a benevolent smile.

Far otherwise was the outward aspect of my grandmother's brother, Eliakim Sheril. He was a nervous, wiry, thin, dry, little old man, every part of whose body appeared to be hung together by springs that were in constant vibration. He had small, keen black eyes, a thin, sharp, hooked nose, which he was constantly buffeting, and blowing, and otherwise maltreating, in the fussy uneasiness which was the habit of the man.

Uncle 'Liakim was a man known as uncle to all the village,—the kindest-souled, most untiringly benevolent, single-hearted old body that could be imagined; but his nervous activity was such as to have procured among the boys a slight change in the rendering of his name, which was always popularly given as Uncle Fliakim, and, still more abbreviated, Uncle Fly.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Sheril is?" says an inquirer at the door of my grandfather's mill.

"If you want to find 'Liakim," says my grandfather, with his usual smile, "never go after him,—you'll never catch him; but stand long enough on any one spot on earth, and he's sure to go by."

Uncle 'Liakim had his own particular business,—the overseeing of a soap and candle factory; but, besides that, he had on his mind the business of everybody else in town,—the sorrows of every widow, the lonely fears of every spinster, the conversion of every reprobate, the orthodoxy of every minister, the manners and morals of all the parish,—all of which caused him to be up early and down late, and flying about confusedly at all hours, full of zeal, full of kindness,



abounding in suggestions, asking questions, the answers of which he could not stop to hear, making promises which he did not remember, and which got him into no end of trouble with people who did, telling secrets, and letting innumerable cats out of countless bags, to the dismay and affright of all reserved and well-conducted people. Uncle Fliakim, in fact, might be regarded in our village of Oldtown as a little brown pudding-stick that kept us in a perpetual stir. To be sure, it was a general stir of loving-kindness and good intentions, yet it did not always give unlimited satisfaction.

For instance, some of the more strictly disposed members of the congregation were scandalised that Uncle Fliakim, every stormy Sunday, nearly destroyed the solemnity of the long prayer by the officious zeal which he bestowed in getting sundry forlorn old maids, widows, and other desolate women to church. He had a horse of that immortal species well known in country villages,—made of whalebone and india-rubber, with a long neck, a hammer-head, and one blind eye,—and a waggon which rattled and tilted and clattered in every part, as if infected with a double portion of its owner's spirits; and, mounting in this, he would drive miles in the rain or the snow, all for the pleasure of importing into the congregation those dry, forlorn, tremulous specimens of female mortality which abound in every village congregation.

Uncle Fliakim had been talked to on this subject, and duly admonished. The benevolence of his motives was allowed; but why, it was asked, must he always drive his waggon with a bang against the doorstep just as the congregation rose to the first prayer? It was a fact that the stillness which followed the words, "Let us pray," was too often broken by the thump of the waggon and the sound, "Whoa, whoa! take care, there!" from without, as Uncle Fly's blind steed rushed headlong against the meeting-house door, as if

he were going straight in, waggon and all; and then there would be a further most unedifying giggle and titter of light-minded young men and damsels when Aunt Bathsheba Sawin and Aunt Jerusha Pettibone, [in their rusty black-crape bonnets', with their big black fans in their hands, slowly rustled and creaked into their seats, while the waggon and Uncle 'Liakim were heard giggiting away. Then the boys, if the tithingman was not looking at them, would bet marbles whether the next load would be old Mother Chris and Phoebe Drury, or Hetty Walker and old Mother Hopestill Loker.

It was a great offence to all the stricter classes that Uncle Fly should demean his waggon by such an unedifying character as Mother Hopestill Loker; for, though her name intimated that she ought to have charity, still she was held no better than a publican and sinner; and good people in those days saw the same impropriety in such people having too much to do with reputable Christians that they used to years ago in a country called Palestine.

For all these reasons Uncle Fliakim was often dealt with as one of good intentions, but wanting the wisdom which is profitable to direct. One year his neighbours thought to employ his superfluous activity by appointing him tithingman; and great indeed in this department were his zeal and activity; but it was soon found that the dear man's innocent sincerity of heart made him the prey of every village good-for-naught who choose to take him in. All the naughty boys in town were agog with expectancy when Joe Valentine declared, with a wink, that he'd drive a team on Sunday right by Uncle Fly's house, over to Hopkinton, with his full consent. Accordingly, the next Sunday he drove leisurely by with a solemn face and a broad weed on his hat. Uncle Fly ran panting, half dressed, and threw himself distractedly on

the neck of the horse. "My young friend, I cannot permit it. You must turn right back."

"My 'dear sir," said Joe, "haven't you heard that my mother is lying dead in Hopkinton at this very moment?"

"Is it possible?" said my uncle, with tears in his eyes. "I beg your pardon. I hadn't heard it. Proceed, by all means. I'm sorry I interrupted you."

The next morning wicked Joe careered by again. "Good morning, Mr. Sheril. I s'pose you know my mother's been lying dead these five years; but I'm equally obliged for your politeness."

Vain was Uncle Fly's indignation. Greater men than he have had to give up before the sovereign power of a laugh, and ere long he resigned the office of tithing-man as one requiring a sterner metal than he possessed. In fact, an unsavoury character, who haunted the tavern, and was called by the boys Old Mopshear, gave a *résumé* of his opinions of tithing-men as seen from the camp of the enemy.

"Old Deacon Badger," he said, "was always lookin' t'other way, and never saw nothin' 'twas goin' on. But there was Uncle Fliakim,—wal, to be sure the gals couldn't tie up their shoes without he was a-lookin'; but then, come to raily doin' anythin', it was only a snap, and he was off again. He wa' n't much more 'n a middlin'-sized grasshopper, arter all. Tell you what," said Mopshear, "it takes a fellow like Israel Scran, that knows what he's about, and 's got some *body* to do with. When old Jerusalem Ben swore he'd drive the stage through the town a Sunday, I tell you it was fun to see Israel Scran. He jest stood out by the road and met the hosses smack, and turned 'em so quick that the stage flopped over like a wink, and Ben was off rolling over and over in the sand. Ben got the wust on't that time. I tell you, it takes Israel Scran to be tithing-man!"

Good Uqele Fliakim had made himself extremely busy in my father's last sickness, dodging out of one door and in at another, at all hours; giving all manner of prescriptions for his temporal and spiritual state, but always in too much of a hurry to stop a minute,—a consideration which, I heard my father say, was the only one which made him tolerable. But, after all, I liked him, though he invariably tumbled over me, either in coming into or going out of the house, and then picked me up and gave me a cent, and went on rejoicing. The number of cents I acquired in this way became at last quite a little fortune.

But time would fail me to go on and describe all the quiddities and oddities of our Sunday congregation. Suffice it to say, that we all grew in those days like the apple-trees in our back lot. Every man had his own quirks and twists, and threw himself out freely in the line of his own individuality; and so a rather jerky, curious, original set of us there was. But such as we were, high and low, good and bad, refined and illiterate, barbarian and civilised, negro and white, the old meeting-house united us all on one day of the week, and its solemn services formed an insensible but strong bond of neighbourhood charity.

We may rail at Blue Laws and Puritan strictness as much as we please, but certainly those communities where our fathers carried out their ideas fully had their strong points; and rude and primitive as our meeting-houses were, this weekly union of all classes in them was a most powerful and efficient means of civilisation. The man or woman cannot utterly sink who on every seventh day is obliged to appear in decent apparel, and to join with all the standing and respectability of the community in a united act of worship.

Nor were our Sunday services, though simple, devoid of their solemn forms. The mixed and motley congregation

came in with due decorum during the ringing of the first bell, and waited in their seats the advent of the minister. The tolling of the bell was the signal for him that his audience were ready to receive him, and he started from his house. The clerical dress of the day, the black silk gown, the spotless bands, the wig and three-cornered hat and black gloves, were items of professional fitness which, in our minister's case, never failed of a due attention. When, with his wife leaning on his arm, he entered at the door of the meeting-house, the whole congregation rose and remained reverently standing until he had taken his seat in the pulpit. The same reverential decorum was maintained after service was over, when all remained standing and uncovered while the minister and his family passed down the broad aisle and left the house. Our fathers were no man-worshippers, but they regarded the minister as an ambassador from the great Sovereign of the universe, and paid reverence to Him whose word he bore in their treatment of him.

On the Sunday following the funeral of any one in the parish, it was customary to preach a sermon having immediate reference to the event which had occurred, in the course of which the nearest friends and relatives were directly addressed, and stood up in their seats to receive the pastoral admonition and consolation. I remember how wan and faded, like a shimmering flower, my poor mother rose in her place, while I was forcibly held down by Aunt Lois's grasp on my jacket till the "orphan children" were mentioned, when I was sent up on my feet with an impulse like a Jack-in-a-box; and afterward the whole family circle arose and stood, as the stream of admonition and condolence became more general. We were reminded that the God of the widow and orphan never dies,—that this life is the shadow, and the life to come the substance,—that there is but one thing need-

ful,—that as our departed friend is to-day, so we may all be to-morrow; and then the choir sung, to the tune of old Darwen,

“Shall man, O God of life and light,  
For ever moulder in the grave?  
Hast Thou forgot Thy glorious work,  
Thy promise and Thy power to save?”

I cannot say much for our country psalmody. Its execution was certainly liable to severe criticism; and Uncle Fliakim, on every occasion of especial solemnity, aggravated its peculiarities by tuning up in a high, cracked voice a weird part, in those days called “counter,” but which would in our days insure his being taken out of the house as a possessed person. But, in spite of all this, those old minor-keyed funeral hymns in which our fathers delighted always had a quality in them that affected me powerfully. The music of all barbarous nations is said to be in the minor key, and there is in its dark combinations something that gives piercing utterance to that undertone of doubt, mystery, and sorrow by which a sensitive spirit always is encompassed in this life.

I was of a peculiarly sensitive organisation; my nerves shivered to every touch, like harp-strings. What might have come over me had I heard the solemn chants of cathedrals, and the deep pulsations of the old organ-hearts that beat there, I cannot say, but certain it is that the rude and primitive singing in our old meeting-house always excited me powerfully. It brought over me, like a presence, the sense of the infinite and eternal, the yearning and the fear and the desire of the poor finite being, so ignorant and so helpless. I left the church lifted up as if walking on air, with the final words of the psalm floating like an illuminated cloud around me,—

“Faith sees the bright eternal doors  
Unfold to make His children way;  
They shall be crown'd with endless life,  
And shine in everlasting day.”



## CHAPTER VI.

Fire-light talks in my Grandmother's Kitchen.

MY grandmother's kitchen was a great, wide, roomy apartment, whose white-sanded floor was always as clean as hands could make it. It was resplendent with the sheen of a set of scoured pewter plates and platters, which stood arranged on a dresser on one side. The great fireplace swept quite across another side. There we burned cord-wood, and the fire was built up on architectural principles known to those days. First came an enormous back-log, rolled in with the strength of two men, on the top of which was piled a smaller log; and then a fore-stick, of a size which would entitle it to rank as a log in our times, went to make the front foundation of the fire. The rearing of the ample pile thereupon was a matter of no small architectural skill, and all the ruling members of our family circle had their own opinions about its erection, which they maintained with the zeal and pertinacity which become earnest people. My grandfather, with his grave smile, insisted that he was the only reasonable fire-builder of the establishment; but when he had arranged his sticks in the most methodical order, my grandmother would be sure to rush out with a thump here, and a twitch there, and divers incoherent exclamations tending to imply that men never knew how to build a fire. Frequently her intense zeal for immediate effect would end in a general rout and roll of the sticks in all directions, with puffs of smoke down the chimney, requiring the setting open of the outside door; and then Aunt Lois would come to the rescue, and, with a face severe with determination, tear down the whole structure and rebuild from the foundation with the exactest precision, but with an air that cast volumes of contempt on all that

had gone before. The fact is, that there is no little nook of domestic life which gives snug harbour to so much self-will and self-righteousness as the family hearth; and this is particularly the case with wood fires, because, from the miscellaneous nature of the material, and the sprightly activity of the combustion, there is a constant occasion for tending and alteration, and so a vast field for individual opinion.

We had come home from our second Sunday service. Our evening meal of smoking brown bread and baked beans had been discussed, and the supper-things washed and put out of sight. There was an uneasy, chill moaning and groaning out of doors, showing the coming up of an autumn storm,—just enough chill and wind to make the brightness of a social hearth desirable,—and my grandfather had built one of his most methodical and splendid fires.

The wide, ample depth of the chimney was aglow in all its cavernous length with the warm leaping light that burst out in lively jets and spirts from every rift and chasm. The great black crane that swung over it, with its multiplicity of pot-hooks and trammels, seemed to have a sort of dusky illumination, like that of old Cæsar's black, shining face, as he sat on his block of wood in the deep recess of the farther corner, with his hands on the knees of his Sunday pantaloons, gazing lovingly into the blaze with all the devotion of a fire-worshipper. On week-day evenings old Cæsar used to have his jack-knife in active play in this corner, and whistles and pop-guns and squirrel-traps for us youngsters grew under his plastic hand; but on Sunday evening he was too good a Christian even to think of a jack-knife, and if his hand casually encountered it in his pocket, he resisted it as a temptation of the devil, and sat peacefully winking and blinking, and occasionally breaking out into a ripple of private giggles which appeared to spring purely from the



overflow of bodily contentment. My Uncle Bill was in that state which is peculiarly apt to manifest itself in the youth of well-conducted families on Sunday evenings,—a kind of friskiness of spirits which appears to be a reactionary condition from the spiritual tension of the day, inclining him to skirmish round on all the borders and outskirts of permitted pleasantries, and threatening every minute to burst out into most unbecoming uproariousness. This state among the youngsters of a family on Sunday evening is a familiar trial of all elders who have had the task of keeping them steady during the sacred hours.

My Uncle Bill, in his week-day frame, was the wit and buffoon of the family,—an adept in every art that could shake the sides, and bring a laugh out on the gravest face. His features were flexible, his powers of grimace and story-telling at times irresistible. On the present occasion it was only my mother's pale, sorrowful face that kept him in any decent bounds. He did not wish to hurt his sister's feelings, but he was boiling over with wild and elfish impulses, which he vented now by a sly tweak at the cat's tail, then by a surreptitious dig at black Cæsar's sides, which made the poor black a helpless, quivering mass of giggle, and then he would slyly make eyes and mouths at Bill and me behind Aunt Lois's chair, which almost slew us with laughter, though all the while he appeared with painful effort to keep on a face of portentous gravity.

On the part of Aunt Lois, however, there began to be manifested unequivocal symptoms that it was her will and pleasure to have us all leave our warm fireside and establish ourselves in the best room,—for we had a best room, else wherefore were we on tea-drinking terms with the high aristocracy of Oldtown? We had our best room, and kept it as cold, as uninviting, and stately, as devoid of human light

or warmth, as the most fashionable shut-up parlour of modern days. It had the tallest and brightest pair of brass andirons conceivable, and a shovel and tongs to match, that were so heavy that the mere lifting them was work enough, without doing anything with them. It had also a bright-varnished mahogany tea-table, over which was a looking-glass, in a gilt frame, with a row of little architectural balls on it; which looking-glass was always kept shrouded in white muslin at all seasons of the year, on account of a tradition that flies might be expected to attack it for one or two weeks in summer. But truth compels me to state, that I never saw or heard of a fly whose heart could endure Aunt Lois's parlour. It was so dark, so cold, so still, that all that frisky, buzzing race, who delight in air and sunshine, universally deserted and seceded from it; yet the looking-glass, and occasionally the fire-irons, were rigorously shrouded, as if desperate attacks might any moment be expected.

Now the kitchen was my grandmother's own room. In one corner of it stood a round table with her favourite books, her great work-basket, and by it a rickety rocking-chair, the bottom of which was of ingenious domestic manufacture, being in fact made by interwoven strips of former coats and pantaloons of the home circle; but a most comfortable and easy seat it made. My grandfather had also a large splint-bottomed arm-chair, with rockers to it, in which he swung luxuriously in the corner of the great fireplace. By the side of its ample blaze we sat down to our family meals, and afterwards, while grandmother and Aunt Lois washed up the tea-things, we all sat and chatted by the fire-light. Now it was a fact that nobody liked to sit in the best room. In the kitchen each member of the family had established unto him or her self some little pet private snuggerly, some chair or stool, some individual nook—forbidden to gentility, but dear

to the ungentle, natural heart,—that we looked back to regretfully when we were banished to the colder regions of the best room.

There the sitting provisions were exactly one dozen stuffed-seated cherry chairs, with upright backs and griffin feet, each foot terminating in a bony claw, which resolutely grasped a ball. These chairs were high and slippery, and preached decorum in the very attitudes which they necessitated, as no mortal could ever occupy them except in the exercise of a constant and collected habit of mind.

Things being thus, when my Uncle Bill saw Aunt Lois take up some coals on a shovel, and look towards the best-room door, he came and laid his hand on hers directly, with, "Now, Lois, what are you going to do?"

"Going to make up a fire in the best room."

"Now, Lois, I protest. You're not going to do any such thing. Hang grandeur and all that.

'Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home,'

you know; and home means right here by mother's kitchen-fire, where she and father sit, and want to sit. You know nobody ever wants to go into that terrible best room of yours."

"Now, Bill, how you talk!" said Aunt Lois, smiling, and putting down her shovel. "But then, you see," she said, the anxious cloud again settling down on her brow,—“you see, we're exposed to calls, and who knows who may come in? I shouldn't wonder if Major Broad or Miss Mehitable might drop in, as they saw you down from college."

"Let 'em come; never fear. They all know we've got a best room, and that's enough. Or, if you'd rather, I'll pin a card to that effect upon the door; and then we'll take our ease. Or, better than that, I'll take 'em all in and show 'em

our best chairs, and irons, and mahogany table, and then we can come out and be comfortable."

"Bill, you're a saucy boy," said Aunt Lois, looking at him indulgently, as she subsided into her chair.

"Yes, that he always was," said my grandfather, with a smile of the kind that fathers give to frisky sophomores in college.

"Well, come sit down, anyway," said my grandmother, "and let's have a little Sunday-night talk."

"Sunday-night talk, with all my heart," said Bill, as he seated himself comfortably right in front of the cheerful blaze. "Well, it must be about 'the meetin',' of course. Our old meeting-house looks as elegant as ever. Of all the buildings I ever saw to worship any kind of a being in, that meeting-house certainly is the most extraordinary. It really grows on me every time I come home!"

"Come, now, Bill," said Aunt Lois.

"Come, now! Ain't I coming? Haven't said anything but what you all know. Said our meeting-house was extraordinary, and you all know it is; and there's extraordinary folks in it. I don't believe so queer a tribe could be mustered in all the land of Israel as we congregate. I hope some of our oddities will be in this evening after cider. I need to study a little, so that I can give representations of nature in our club at Cambridge. Nothing like going back to nature, you know. Old Obscure, seems to me, was got up in fine fancy this morning; and Sam Lawson had an extra touch of the horse about him. Hepsy must have been disciplining him this morning, before church. I always know when Sam is fresh from a matrimonial visitation: he's peculiarly pathetic about the gills at those times. Why don't Sam come in here?"

"I'm sure I hope he won't," said Aunt Lois. "One

reason why I wanted to sit in the best room to-night was that every old tramper and queer object sees the light of our kitchen fire, and comes in for a lounge and a drink; and then, when one has genteel persons calling, it makes it unpleasant."

"Oh, we all know you're aristocratic, Lois; but, you see, you can't be indulged. You must have your purple and fine linen and your Lazarus at the gate come together sometime, just as they do in the meeting-house and the graveyard. Good for you all, if not agreeable."

Just at this moment the conversation was interrupted by a commotion in the back sink-room, which sounded much like a rush of a flight of scared fowl. It ended with a tumble of a row of milk-pans toward chaos, and the door flew open and Uncle Fly appeared.

"What on earth!" said my grandmother, starting up. "That you, 'Liakim? Why on earth *must* you come in the back way and knock down all my milk-pans?"

"Why, I came 'cross lots from Aunt Bathsheba Sawin's," said Uncle Fly, dancing in, "and I got caught in those pesky blackberry-bushes in the graveyard, and I do believe I've torn my breeches all to pieces," he added, pirouetting and frisking with very airy gyrations, and trying vainly to get a view of himself behind, in which operation he went round and round as a cat does after her tail.

"Laws a-massy, 'Liakim!" said my grandmother, whose ears were startled by a peculiar hissing sound in the sink-room, which caused her to spring actively in that direction. "Well, now, you have been and done it! You've gone and fidged the tap out of my beer-barrel, and here's the beer all over the floor. I hope you're satisfied now."

"Sorry for it. Didn't mean to. I'll wipe it right up. Where's a towel, or floor-cloth, or something?" cried Uncle

Fly, whirling in more active circles round and round, till he seemed to me to have a dozen pairs of legs.

"Do sit down, 'Liakim," said my grandmother. "Of course you didn't mean to; but next time don't come bustling and whirligigging through my back sink-room after dark. I do believe you never will be quiet till you're in your grave."

"Sit down, uncle," said Bill. "Never mind mother—she'll come all right by and by. And never mind your breeches, —all things earthly are transitory, as Parson Lothrop told us to-day. Now let's come back to our Sunday talk. Did ever anybody see such an astonishing providence as Miss Mehitable Rosseter's bonnet to-day? Does it belong to the old or the new dispensation, do you think?"

"Bill, I'm astonished at you!" said Aunt Lois.

"Miss Mehitable is of a most respectable family," said Aunt Keziah, reprovingly. "Her father and grandfather and great-grandfather were all ministers; and two of her mother's brothers, Jeduthun and Amariah."

"Now, take care, youngster," said Uncle Fly. "You see you young colts musn't be too airy. When a fellow begins to speak evil of bonnets, nobody knows where he may end."

"Bless me, one and all of you," said Bill, "I have the greatest respect for Miss Mehitable. Furthermore, I like her. She's a real spicy old concern. I'd rather talk with her than any dozen of modern girls. But I do wish she'd give me that bonnet to put in our Cambridge cabinet. I'd tell 'em it was the wing of a Madagascar bat. Blessed old soul, how innocent she sat under it!—never knowing to what wandering thoughts it was giving rise. Such bonnets interfere with my spiritual progress."

At this moment, by the luck that always brings in the person people are talking of, Miss Mehitable came in, with the identical old wonder on her head. Now, outside of our



own blood-relations, no one that came within our doors ever received a warmer welcome than Miss Mehitable. Even the children loved her, with that instinctive sense by which children and dogs learn the discerning of spirits. To be sure she was as gaunt and brown as the Ancient Mariner, but hers was a style of ugliness that was neither repulsive nor vulgar. Personal uncomeliness has its differing characters, and there are some very homely women who have a style that amounts to something like beauty. I know that this is not the common view of the matter; but I am firm in the faith that some very homely women have a certain attraction about them which is increased by their homeliness. It is like the quaintness of Japanese china,—not beautiful, but having a strong, pronounced character, as far remote as possible from the ordinary and vulgar, and which, in union with vigorous and agreeable traits of mind, is more stimulating than any mere insipid beauty.

In short, Miss Mehitable was a specimen of what I should call the good-goblin style of beauty. And people liked her so much that they came to liking the singularities which individualised her from all other people. Her features were prominent and harsh; her eyebrows were shaggy, and finished abruptly half across her brow, leaving but half an eyebrow on each side. She had, however, clear, trustworthy, steady eyes, of a greenish gray, which impressed one with much of that idea of steadfast faithfulness that one sees in the eyes of some good, homely dogs. "Faithful and true," was written in her face as legibly as eyes could write it.

For the rest, Miss Mehitable had a strong mind, was an omnivorous reader, apt, ready in conversation, and with a droll, original way of viewing things, which made her society ever stimulating. To me her house was always full of delightful images,—a great, calm, cool, shady, old-fashioned

house, full of books and of quaint old furniture, with a garden on one side where were no end of lilies, hollyhocks, pinks, and peonies, to say nothing of currants, raspberries, apples, and pears, and other carnal delights, all of which good Miss Mehitable was free to dispense to her child-visitors. It was my image of heaven to be allowed to go to spend an afternoon with Miss Mehitable, and establish myself, in a shady corner of the old study which contained her father's library, over an edition of "Æsop's Fables" illustrated with plates, which, opened, was an endless field of enchantment to me.

Miss Mehitable lived under the watch and charge of an ancient female domestic named Polly Shubel. Polly was a representative specimen of the now extinct species of Yankee serving-maids. She had been bred up from a child in the Rosseter family of some generations back. She was of that peculiar kind of constitution, known in New England, which merely becomes drier and tougher with the advance of time, without giving any other indications of old age. The exact number of her years was a point unsettled even among the most skilful genealogists of Oldtown. Polly was a driving, thrifty, doctrinal, and practical female, with strong bones and muscles, and strong opinions, believing most potently in early rising, soap and sand, and the Assembly's Catechism, and knowing *certainly* all that she did know. Polly considered Miss Mehitable as a sort of child under her wardship, and conducted the whole business of life for her with a sovereign and unanswerable authority. As Miss Mehitable's tastes were in the world of books and ideas, rather than of physical matters, she resigned herself to Polly's sway with as good a grace as possible, though sometimes she felt that it rather abridged her freedom of action.

Luckily for my own individual self, Polly patronised me, and gave me many a piece of good advice, sweetened with



gingerbread, when I went to visit Miss Rosseter. I counted Miss Mehitable among my personal friends; so to-night, when she came in, I came quickly and laid hold of the skirt of her gown, and looked admiringly upon her dusky face, under the portentous shadow of a great bonnet shaded by nodding bows of that preternatural colour which people used to call olive-green. She had a word for us all, a cordial grasp of the hand for my mother, who sat silent and thoughtful in her corner, and a warm hand-shake all round.

"You see," she said, drawing out an old-fashioned snuff-box, and tapping upon it, "my house grew so stupid that I must come and share my pinch of snuff with you. It's windy out to-night, and I should think a storm was brewing; and the rattling of one's own window-blinds, as one sits alone, isn't half so amusing as some other things."

"You know, Miss Rosseter, we're always delighted to have you come in," said my grandmother, and my Aunt Lois, and my Aunt Keziah, all at once. This, by the way, was a little domestic trick that the females of our family had; and, as their voices were upon very different keys, the effect was somewhat peculiar. My Aunt Lois's voice was high and sharp, my grandmother's a hearty chest-tone, while Aunt Keziah's had an uncertain buzz between the two, like the vibrations of a loose string; but as they all had corresponding looks and smiles of welcome, Miss Mehitable was pleased.

"I always indulge myself in thinking I am welcome," she said. "And now pray how is our young scholar, Master William Badger? What news do you bring us from old Harvard?"

"Almost anything you want to hear, Miss Mehitable. You know that I am your most devoted slave."

"Not so sure of that, sir," she said, with a whimsical twinkle of her eye. "Don't you know that your sex are

always treacherous? How do I know that you don't serve up old Miss Rosseter when you give representations of the Oldtown curiosities there at Cambridge? We are a set here that might make a boy's fortune in that line,—now aren't we?"

"How do you know that I do serve up Oldtown curiosities?" said Bill, somewhat confused, and blushing to the roots of his hair.

"How do I know? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? and can you help being a mimic, as you were born, always were, and always will be?"

"Oh, but I'm sure, Miss Mehitable, Bill never would,—he has too much respect," said Aunt Keziah and Aunt Lois, simultaneously again.

"Perhaps not; but if he wants to, he's welcome. What are queer old women for, if young folks may not have a good laugh out of them now and then? If it's only a friendly laugh, it's just as good as crying, and better too. I'd like to be made to laugh at myself. I think generally we take ourselves altogether too seriously. What now, bright eyes?" she added, as I nestled nearer to her. "Do you want to come up into an old woman's lap? Well, here you come. Bless me, what a tangle of curls we have here! Don't your thoughts get caught in these curls sometimes?"

I looked bashful and wistful at this address, and Miss Mehitable went on twining my curls around her fingers, and trotting me on her knee, lulling me into a delicious dreaminess, in which she seemed to me to be one of those nice, odd-looking old fairy women that figure to such effect in stories.

The circle all rose again as Major Broad came in. Aunt Lois thought, with evident anguish, of the best room. Here was the Major, sure enough, and we all sitting round the kitchen fire! But my grandfather and grandmother welcomed

him cheerfully to their corner, and enthroned him in my grandfather's splint-bottomed rocking-chair, where he sat far more comfortably than if he had been perched on a genteel, slippery-bottomed stuffed chair with claw feet.

The Major performed the neighbourly kindness of the occasion in an easy way. He spoke a few words to my mother of the esteem and kindness he had felt for my father, in a manner that called up the blood into her thin cheeks, and made her eyes dewy with tears. Then he turned to the young collegian, recognising him as one of the rising lights of Oldtown.

"Our only nobility now," he said to my grandfather. "We've cut off everything else: no distinction now, sir, but educated and uneducated."

"It is a hard struggle for our human nature to give up titles and ranks, though," said Miss Mehitable. "For my part, I have a ridiculous kindness for them yet. I know it's all nonsense; but I can't help looking back to the court we used to have at the Government House in Boston. You know it was something to hear of the goings and doings of my Lord this and my Lady that, and of Sir Thomas and Sir Peter and Sir Charles, and all the rest of 'em."

"Yes," said Bill; "the Oldtown folks call their minister's wife Lady yet."

"Well, that's a little comfort," said Miss Mehitable; "one don't want life an entire dead level. Do let us have one titled lady among us."

"And a fine lady she is," said the Major. "Our parson did a good thing in that alliance."

While the conversation was thus taking a turn of the most approved genteel style, Aunt Keziah's ears heard alarming premonitory sounds outside the door. "Who's that at the scraper?" said she.

"Oh, it's Sam Lawson," said Aunt Lois, with a sort of groan. "You may be sure of that."

"Come in, Sam, my boy," said Uncle Bill, opening the door. "Glad to see you."

"Wal now, Mr. Badger," said Sam, with white eyes of veneration, "I'm real glad to see ye. I telled Hepsy you'd want to see me. You're the fust one of my Saturday arternoon fishin' boys that's got into college, and I'm 'mazing proud on't. I tell you I walk tall,—ask'em if I don't, round to the store."

"You always were gifted in that line," said Bill. "But come, sit down in the corner, and tell us what you've been about."

"Wal, you see, I thought I'd jest go over to North Parish this arternoon, jest for a change, like, and I wanted to hear one of them *Hopkintinsians* they tell so much about; and Parson Simpson, he's one on 'em."

"You ought not to be roving off on Sunday, leaving your own meeting," said my grandfather.

"Wall, you see, Deacon Badger, I'm interested in these 'ere new doctrines. I met your Polly a-goin' over, too," he said to Miss Mehitable.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Mehitable, "Polly is a great Hopkintinsian. She can hardly have patience to sit under our Parson Lothrop's preaching. It's rather hard on me, because Polly makes it a point of conscience to fight every one of his discourses over to me in my parlour. Somebody gave Polly an Arminian tract last Sunday, entitled, 'The Apostle Paul an Arminian.' It would have done you good to hear Polly's comments. 'Postel Paul an Arminian! He's the biggest 'lectioner of 'em all.'"

"That he is," said my grandmother, warmly. "Polly's read her Bible to some purpose."

"Well, Sam, what did you think of the sermon?" said Uncle Bill.

"Wal," said Sam, leaning over the fire, with his long, bony hands alternately raised to catch the warmth, and then dropped with an utter laxness, when the warmth became too pronounced, "Parson Simpson 's a smart man; but, I tell ye, it's kind 'o discouragin'. Why, he said our state and condition by natur was just like this. We was clear down in a well fifty feet deep, and the sides all round nothin' but glare ice; but we was under immediate obligations to get out, 'cause we was free, voluntary agents. But nobody ever had got out, and nobody would, unless the Lord reached down and took 'em. And whether He would or not nobody could tell; it was all sovereignty. He said there wa'n't one in a hundred,—not one in a thousand,—not one in ten thousand,—that would be saved. Lordy massy, says I to myself, ef that's so they're any of 'em welcome to my chance. And so I kind o' ris up and come out, 'cause I'd got a pretty long walk home, and I wanted to go round by South Pond, and inquire about Aunt Sally Morse's toothache."

"I heard the whole sermon over from Polly," said Miss Mehitable, "and as it was not a particularly cheerful subject to think of, I came over here." These words were said with a sort of chilly, dreary sigh, that made me turn and look up in Miss Mehitable's face. It looked haggard and weary, as of one tired of struggling with painful thoughts.

"Wal," said Sam Lawson, "I stopped a minute round to your back-door, Miss Rosseter, to talk with Polly about the sermon. I was a-tellin' Polly that that 'ere was puttin' inability a leetle too strong."

"Not a bit, not a bit," said Uncle Fly, "so long as it's moral inability. There's the point, ye see,—*moral*—that's the word. That makes it all right."

"Wal," said Sam, "I was a-puttin' it to Polly this way. Ef a man 's cut off his hands, it ain't right to require him to chop wood. Wal, Polly, she says he'd no business to cut his hands off; and so he ought to be required to chop all the same. Wal, I telled her it was Adam chopped our hands off. But she said, no; it was we did it *in* Adam, and she brought up the Catechise plain enough,—' *We sinned in him*, and fell with him.'"

"She had you there, Sam," said Uncle Fly, with great content. "You won't catch Polly tripping on the Catechism."

"Well, for my part," said Major Broad, "I don't like these doctrinal subtilties, Deacon Badger. Now I've got a volume of Mr. Addison's religious writings that seem to me about the right thing. They're very pleasing reading. Mr. Addison is my favourite author of a Sunday."

"I'm afraid Mr. Addison had nothing but just mere morality and natural religion," said my grandmother, who could not be withheld from bearing her testimony. "You don't find any of the discriminating doctrines in Mr. Addison. Major Broad, did you ever read Mr. Bellamy's 'True Religion Delineated and Distinguished from all Counterfeits?'"

"No, madam, I never did," said Major Broad.

"Well, I earnestly hope you will read *that* book," said my grandmother.

"My wife is always at me about one good book or another," said my grandfather; "but I manage to do with my old Bible. I haven't used that up yet."

"I should know about Dr. Bellamy's book by this time," said Miss Mehitable, "for Polly entrenches herself in that, and preaches out of it daily. Polly certainly missed her vocation when she was trained for a servant. She is a born professor of theology. She is so circumstantial about all

that took place at the time the angels fell, and when the covenant was made with Adam in the garden of Eden, that I sometimes question whether she really might not have been there personally. Polly is particularly strong on Divine sovereignty. She thinks it applies to everything under the sun except my affairs. 'Those she chooses to look after herself.'

"Well," said Major Broad, "I am not much of a theologian. I want to be taught my duty. Parson Lothrop's discourses are generally very clear and practical, and they suit me."

"They are good as far as they go," said my grandmother; "but I like good, strong, old-fashioned doctrine. I like such writers as Mr. Edwards and Dr. Bellamy and Dr. Hopkins. It's all very well, your essays on cheerfulness and resignation, and all that; but I want something that takes strong hold of you, so that you feel something has got you that *can* hold."

"The Cambridge Platform, for instance," said Uncle Bill.

"Yes, my son, the Cambridge Platform. I ain't ashamed of it. It was made by men whose shoe-latchet we aren't worthy to unloose. I believe it,—every word on't. I believe it, and I'm going to believe it."

"And would if there was twice as much of it," said Uncle Bill. "That's right, mother, stand up for your colours. I admire your spirit. But, Sam, what does Hepsy think of all this? I suppose you enlighten her when you return from your investigations?"

"Wal, I try to. But lordy massy, Mr. Badger, Hepsy don't take no kind o' interest in the doctrines, no mor'n nothin' at all. She's so kind o' worldly, Hepsy is. It's allers meat and drink, meat and drink, with her. That's all she's thinkin' of."



“And if *you* would think more of such things, she wouldn't have to think so much,” said Aunt Lois, sharply. “Don't you know the Bible says, that the man that provideth not for his own household hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel?”

“I don't see,” said Sam, slowly flopping his great hands up and down over the blaze,—“I railyly don't see why folks are allers a throwin' up that 'ere text at me. I'm sure I work as hard as a man ken. Why, I was a-workin' last night till nigh twelve o'clock, doin' up odd jobs o' blacksmithin'. They kind o' 'cumulate, ye know.”

“Mr. Lawson,” said my grandmother, with a look of long-suffering patience, “how often and often must I tell you, that if you'd be steadier round your home, and work in regular hours, Hepsy would be more comfortable, and things would go on better?”

“Lordy massy, Mis' Badger, bless your soul and body, ye don't know nothin' about it;—ye don't know nothin' what I undergo. Hepsy, she's at me from morning till night. First it's one thing, and then another. One day it rains, and her clothes-line breaks. She's at me 'bout that. Now I tell her, ‘Hepsy, I ain't to blame,—I don't make the rain.’ And then another day she's at me agin 'cause the wind's east, and fetches the smoke down chimbley. I tell her, ‘Hepsy, now look here,—*do* I make the wind blow?’ But it's no use talkin' to Hepsy.”

“Well, Sam, I take your part,” said Bill. “I always knew you was a regular martyr. Come, boys, go down to the cellar and draw a pitcher of cider. We'll stay him with flagons, and comfort him with apples. Won't we, Sam?”

As Sam was prime favourite with all boys, my brother Bill and I started willingly enough on this errand, one carrying the candle and the other a great stone pitcher of bounti-



ful proportions, which always did hospitable duty on similar occasions.

Just as we returned, bearing our pitcher, there came another rap at the outside door of the kitchen, and old Betty Poganut and Sally Wonsamug stood at the door.

"Well, now, Mis' Badger," said Betty, "Sally and me, we thought we must jest run in, we go so scar't. We was coming through that Bill Morse's woods, and there come such a flash o' lightnin' it most blinded us, and the wind blew enough to blow a body over; and we thought there was a storm right down on us, and we run jest as fast as we could. We didn't know what to do, we was so scar't. I'm mortal 'fraid of lightnin'."

"Why, Betty, you forgot the sermon to-day. You should have said your prayers, as Parson Lothrop tells you," said my grandfather.

"Well, I did kind o' put up a sort o' silent 'jaculation, as a body may say. That is, I jest said, 'O Lord,' and kind o' gin Him a wink, you know."

"Oh, you did?" said my grandfather.

"Yes, I kind o' thought He'd know what I meant."

My grandfather turned with a smile to Miss Mehitable. "These Indians have their own wild ways of looking at things, after all."

"Well, now, I s'pose you haven't had a bit of supper, either of you," said my grandmother, getting up. "It's commonly the way of it."

"Well, to tell the truth, I was sayin' to Sarah that if we come down to Mis' Deacon Badger's I shouldn't wonder if we got something good," said Betty, her broad, coarse face and baggy cheeks beginning to be illuminated with a smile.

"Here, Horace, you come and hold the candle while I go into the buttery and get 'em some cold pork and beans," said

my grandmother, cheerily. "The poor creturs don't get a good meal of victuals very often; and I baked a good lot on purpose."

If John Bunyan had known my grandmother, he certainly would have introduced her in some of his histories as "the housekeeper whose name was Bountiful;" and under her care an ample meal of brown bread and pork and beans was soon set forth on the table in the corner of the kitchen, to which the two hungry Indian women sat down with the appetite of wolves. A large mug was placed between them, which Uncle Bill filled to the brim with cider.

"I s'pose you'd like twice a mug better than once a mug, Sally," he said, punning on her name.

"Oh, if the mug's only big enough," said Sally, her snaky eyes gleaming with appetite; "and it's always a good big mug one gets here."

Sam Lawson's great white eyes began irresistibly to wander in the direction of the plentiful cheer which was being so liberally dispensed the other side of the room.

"Want some, Sam, my boy?" said Uncle Bill, with a patronising freedom.

"Why, bless your soul, Master Bill, I wouldn't care a bit if I took a plate o' them beans and some o' that 'ere pork. Hepsy didn't save no beans for me; and, walkin' all the way from North Parish, I felt kind o' empty and windy, as a body may say. You know Scriptur' tells about bein' filled with the east wind; but I never found it noways satisfyin',—it sets sort o' cold on the stomach."

"Draw up, Sam, and help yourself," said Uncle Bill, putting plate and knife and fork before him; and Sam soon showed that he had a vast internal capacity for the stowing away of beans and brown bread.

Meanwhile Major Broad and my grandfather drew their chairs together, and began a warm discussion of the Con-

stitution of the United States, which had been recently presented for acceptance in a Convention of the State of Massachusetts.

"I haven't seen you, Major Broad," said my grandfather, "since you came back from the Convention. I'm very anxious to have our State of Massachusetts accept that Constitution. We're in an unsettled condition now; we don't know fairly where we are. If we accept this Constitution, we shall be a nation,—we shall have something to go to work on."

"Well, Deacon Badger, to say the truth, I could not vote for this Constitution in Convention. They have adopted it by a small majority; but I shall be bound to record my dissent from it."

"Pray, Major, what are your objections?" said Miss Mehitable.

"I have two. One is, it gives too much power to the President. There's an appointing power and a power of patronage, that will play the mischief some day in the hands of an ambitious man. That's one objection. The other is the recognising and encouraging of slavery in the Constitution. That is such a dreadful wrong,—such a shameful inconsistency, —when we have just come through a battle for the doctrine that all men are free and equal, to turn round and found our national government on a recognition of African slavery. It cannot and will not come to good."

"Oh, well," said my grandfather, "slavery will gradually die out. You see how it is going in the New England States."

"I cannot think so," said the Major. "I have a sort of feeling about this that I cannot resist. If we join those States that still mean to import and use slaves, our nation will meet some dreadful punishment. I am certain of it." \*

\* The dissent of Major Broad of Natick, and several others, on the

"Well, really," said my grandfather, "I'm concerned to hear you speak so. I have felt such anxiety to have something settled. You see, without a union we are all afloat,—we are separate logs, but no raft."

"Yes," said Miss Mehitable, "but nothing can be settled that isn't founded on right. We ought to dig deep, and lay our foundations on a rock, when we build for posterity."

"Were there many of your way of thinking in the Convention, Major?" said my grandfather.

"Well, we had a pretty warm discussion, and we came very near to carrying it. Now, in Middlesex County, for instance, where we are, there were only seventeen in favour of the Constitution, and twenty-five against; and in Worcester County there were only seven in favour and forty-three against. Well, they carried it at last by a majority of nineteen; but the minority recorded their protest. Judge Widgery of Portland, General Thompson of Topsham, and Dr. Taylor of Worcester, rather headed the opposition. Then the town of Andover instructed its representative, Mr. Symmes, to vote against it, but he didn't; he voted on the other side, and I understand they are dreadfully indignant about it. I saw a man from Andover last week who said that he actually thought Symmes would be obliged to leave the town, he was so dreadfully unpopular."

"Well, Major Broad, I agree with you," said my grandmother, heartily, "and I honour you for the stand you took. Slavery is a sin and a shame; and I say, with Jacob, 'O my soul, come not thou into their secret,—unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.' I wish we may keep clear on't. I don't want anything that we can't ask God's blessing on heartily, and we certainly can't on this. Why, anybody

grounds above stated, may still be read in the report of the proceedings of the Convention that ratified the Constitution.

that sees that great scar on Cæsar's forehead sees what slavery comes to."

My grandmother always pointed her anti-slavery arguments with an appeal to this mark of ill-usage which old Cæsar had received at the hands of a brutal master years before, and the appeal never failed to convince the domestic circle.

"Well," said my grandfather, after some moments of silence, in which he sat gazing fixedly at the great red coals of a hickory log, "you see, Major, it's done, and can't be helped."

"It's done," said the Major, "but in my opinion mischief will come of it as sure as there is a God in heaven."

"Let's hope not," said my grandfather, placidly.

Outside the weather was windy and foul, the wind rattling doors, shaking and rumbling down the chimney, and causing the great glowing circle lighted by the fire to seem warmer and brighter. The Indian women and Sam Lawson, having finished their meal and thoroughly cleaned out the dishes, grouped themselves about the end of the ingle already occupied by black Cæsar, and began a little private gossip among themselves.

"I say," says Sam, raising his voice to call my grandfather's attention, "do you know, Deacon Badger, whether anybody is living in the Dench house now?"

"There wasn't, the last I knew about it," said my grandfather.

"Wal, you won't make some folks believe but what that 'ere house is haunted."

"Haunted!" said Miss Mehitable; "nothing more likely. What old house isn't?—if one only knew it; and that certainly ought to be if ever a house was."

"But this 'ere's a regular *haunt*," said Sam. "I was

a-talkin' the other night with Bill Payne and Jake Marshall, and they both on 'em said that they'd seen strange things in them grounds,—they'd seen a figger of a man"—

"With his head under his arm," suggested Uncle Bill.

"No, a man in a long red cloak," said Sam Lawson, "such as Sir Harry Frankland used to wear."

"Poor Sir Harry!" said Miss Mehitable; "has he come to that?"

"Did you know Sir Harry?" said Aunt Lois.

"I have met him once or twice at the Governor's house," said Miss Mehitable. "Lady Lothrop knew Lady Frankland very well."

"Well, Sam," said Uncle Bill, "do let's hear the end of this haunting."

"Nothin', only the other night I was a-goin' over to watch with Lem Moss, and I passed pretty nigh the Dench place, and I thought I'd jest look round it a spell. And as sure as you're alive I see smoke a comin' out o' the chimbley."

"I didn't know as ghosts ever used the fireplaces," said Uncle Bill. "Well, Sam, did you go in?"

"No, I was pretty much in a hurry; but I telled Jake and Bill, and then they each on 'em had something to match that they'd seen. As nigh as I can make it out, there's that 'ere boy that they say was murdered and thrown down that 'ere old well walks sometimes. And then there's a woman appears to some, and this 'ere man in a red cloak; and they think it's Sir Harry in his red cloak."

"For my part," said Aunt Lois, "I never had much opinion of Sir Harry Frankland, or Lady Frankland either. I don't think such goings on ever ought to be countenanced in society."

"They both repented bitterly,—repented in sackcloth and

ashes," said Miss Mehitable. "And if God forgives such sins, why shouldn't we?"

"What was the story?" said Major Broad.

"Why," said Aunt Lois, "haven't you heard of Agnes Surridge, of Marblehead? She was housemaid in a tavern there, and Sir Harry fell in love with her, and took her and educated her. That was well enough; but when she'd done going to school he took her home to his house in Boston, and called her his daughter; although people became pretty sure that the connexion was not what it should be, and they refused to have anything to do with her. So he bought this splendid place out in the woods, and built a great palace of a house, and took Miss Agnes out there. People that wanted to be splendidly entertained, and that were not particular as to morals, used to go out to visit them."

"I used to hear great stories of their wealth, and pomp, and luxury," said my grandmother, "but I mourned over it, that it should come to this in New England, that people could openly set such an example and be tolerated. It wouldn't have been borne a generation before, I can tell you. No, indeed,—the magistrates would have put a stop to it. But these noblemen, when they came over to America, seemed to think themselves lords of God's heritage, and free to do just as they pleased."

"But," said Miss Mehitable, "they repented, as I said. He took her to England, and there his friends refused to receive her; and then he was appointed ambassador to Lisbon, and he took her there. On the day of the great earthquake Sir Harry was riding with a lady of the court when the shock came, and in a moment, without warning, they found themselves buried under the ruins of a building they were passing. He wore a scarlet cloak, as was the fashion; and they say that in her dying agonies the poor



creature bit through this cloak and sleeve into the flesh of his arm, and made a mark that he carried to his dying day. Sir Harry was saved by Agnes Surridge. She came over the ruins, calling and looking for him, and he heard her voice and answered, and she got men to come and dig him out. When he was in that dreadful situation, he made a vow to God, if He would save his life, that he would be a different man. And he was a changed man from that day. He was married to Agnes Surridge as soon as they could get a priest to perform the ceremony; and when he took her back to England all his relations received her, and she was presented in court, and moved in society with perfect acceptance."

"I don't think it ever ought to have been," said Aunt Lois. "Such women never ought to be received."

"What! is there no place of repentance for a woman?" said Miss Mehitable. "Christ said, 'Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.'"

I noticed again that sort of shiver of feeling in Miss Mehitable; and there was a peculiar thrill in her voice, as she said these words, that made me sensible that she was speaking from some inward depth of feeling.

"Don't you be so hard and sharp, Lois," said my grandmother; "sinners must have patience with sinners."

"Especially with sinners of quality, Lois," said Uncle Bill. "By all accounts Sir Harry and Lady Frankland swept all before them when they came back to Boston."

"Of course," said Miss Mehitable; "what was done in court would be done in Boston, and whom Queen Charlotte received would be received in our upper circles. Lady Lothrop never called on her till she was Lady Frankland, but after that I believe she has visited out at their place."

"Wal, I've heerd 'em say," said Sam Lawson, "that it would take a woman two days jest to get through cleaning

the silver that there was in that 'ere house, to say nothing about the carpets and the curtains and the tapestry. But then, when the war broke out, Lady Frankland, she took most of it back to England, I guess, and the house has been back and forward to one and another. I never could rightly know just who did live in it. I heard about some French folks that lived there one time. I thought some day, when I hadn't nothing else to do, I'd jest walk over to old Granny Walker's, that lives over the other side of Hopkinton. She used to be a housekeeper to Lady Frankland, and I could get particulars out o' her."

"Well," said Miss Mehitable, "I know one woman that must go back to a haunted house, and that is this present one." So saying, she rose and put me off her knee.

"Send this little man over to see me to-morrow," she said to my mother. "Polly has a cake for him, and I shall find something to amuse him."

Major Broad, with old-fashioned gallantry, insisted on waiting on Miss Mehitable home; and Sam Lawson reluctantly tore himself from the warm corner to encounter the asperities of his own fireside.

"Here, Sam," said good-natured Bill,—“here's a great red apple for Hepsy."

"Ef I dares to go nigh enough to give it to her," said Sam, with a grimace. "She's allers a castin' it up at me that I don't want to set with her at home. But lordy massy, she don't consider that a fellow don't want to set and be hectored and lectured where he can do better elsewhere."

"True enough, Sam; but give my regards to her."

As to the two Indian women, they gave it as their intention to pass the night by the kitchen fire; and my grandmother, to whom such proceedings were not at all strange, assented, —producing for each a blanket, which had often seen similar

service. My grandfather closed the evening by bringing out his great Bible and reading a chapter. Then we all knelt down in prayer.

So passed an evening in my grandmother's kitchen,—where religion, theology, politics, the gossip of the day, and the legends of the supernatural all conspired to weave a fabric of thought quaint and various. Intense earnestness, a solemn undertone of deep mournful awe, was overlaid with quaint tracteries of humour, strange and weird in their effect. I was one of those children who are all ear,—dreamy listeners, who brood over all that they hear, without daring to speak of it; and in this evening's conversation I had heard enough to keep my eyes broad open long after my mother had laid me in bed. The haunted house and its vague wonders filled my mind, and I determined to question Sam Lawson yet more about it.

But now that I have fairly introduced myself, the scene of my story, and many of the actors in it, I must take my reader off for a while, and relate a history that must at last blend with mine in one story.

## CHAPTER VII.

Old Crab Smith.

ON the brow of yonder hill you see that old, red farmhouse, with its slanting back roof relieved against the golden sky of the autumn afternoon. The house lifts itself up dark and clear under the shadow of two great elm-trees that droop over it, and is the first of a straggling, irregular cluster of farmhouses that form the village of Needmore. A group of travellers, sitting on a bit of rock in the road below the hill on which the farmhouse stands, are looking up to it, in earnest conversation.

"Mother, if you can only get up there, we'll ask them to let you go in and rest," said a little boy of nine years to a weary, pale, sick-looking woman, who sat as in utter exhaustion and discouragement on the rock. A little girl two years younger than the boy sat picking at the moss at her feet, and earnestly listening to her older brother with the air of one who is attending to the words of a leader.

"I don't feel as if I could get a step farther," said the woman; and the increasing deadly paleness of her face confirmed her words.

"O mother, don't give up," said the boy; "just rest here a little and then lean on me, and we'll get you up the hill; and then I'm sure they'll take you in. Come, now; I'll run and get you some water in our tin cup, and you'll feel better soon." And the boy ran to a neighbouring brook and filled a small tin cup, and brought the cool water to his mother.

She drank it, and then, fixing a pair of dark, pathetic eyes on the face of her boy, she said: "My dear child, you have always been such a blessing to me! What should I do with you?"

"Well, mother, now, if you feel able, just rest on my shoulder, and Tiny will take the bundle. You take it, Tiny, and we'll find a place to rest."

And so, slowly and with difficulty, the three wound their way up to the grassy top of the hill where stood the red house. This house belonged to a man named Caleb Smith, whose character had caused the name he bore to degenerate into another, which was held to be descriptive of his nature, namely, "Crab;" and the boys of the vicinity commonly expressed the popular idea of the man by calling him "Old Crab Smith." His was one of those sour, cross, gnarly natures that now and then are to be met with in New England, which, like knotty cider-apples, present a compound of hard-

ness, sourness, and bitterness. It was affirmed that a continual free indulgence in very hard cider as a daily beverage was one great cause of this churlishness of temper; but be that as it may, there was not a boy in the village that did not know and take account of it in all his estimates and calculations, as much as of north-east storms and rainy weather. No child ever willingly carried a message to him; no neighbour but dreaded to ask a favour of him; nobody hoped to borrow or beg of him; nobody willingly hired themselves out to him, or did him cheerful service. In short, he was a petrified man, walled out from all neighbourhood sympathies, and standing alone in his crabbedness. And it was to this man's house that the wandering orphan boy was leading his poor sick mother.

The three travellers approached a neat back porch on the shady side of the house, where an old woman sat knitting. This was Old Crab Smith's wife, or, more properly speaking, his lifelong bond-slave,—the only human being whom he could so secure to himself that she should be always at hand for him to vent that residue of ill-humour upon which the rest of the world declined to receive. Why half the women in the world marry the men they do, is a problem that might puzzle any philosopher; how any woman could marry Crab Smith, was the standing wonder of all the neighbourhood. And yet Crab's wife was a modest, industrious, kindly creature, who uncomplainingly toiled from morning till night to serve and please him, and received her daily allowance of grumbling and fault-finding with quiet submission. She tried all she could to mediate between him and the many whom his ill-temper was constantly provoking. She did surreptitious acts of kindness here and there, to do away the effects of his hardness, and shrunk and quivered for fear of being detected in goodness, as much as many another might for fear of being

discovered in sin. She had been many times a mother,—had passed through all the trials and weaknesses of maternity without one tender act of consideration, one encouraging word. Her children had grown up and gone from her, always eager to leave the bleak, ungenial home, and go out to shift for themselves in the world, and now, in old age, she was still working. Worn to a shadow,—little, old, wrinkled, bowed,—she was still about the daily round of toil, and still the patient recipient of the murmurs and chidings of her tyrant.

“My mother is so sick she can’t get any farther,” said a little voice from under the veranda; “won’t you let her come in and lie down a while?”

“Massy, child,” said the little old woman, coming forward with a trembling, uncertain step. “Well, she does look beat out, to be sure. Come up and rest ye a bit.”

“If you’ll only let me lie down a while and rest me,” said a faint, sweet voice.

“Come up here,” said the old woman, standing quivering like a gray shadow on the top door-step; and shading her wrinkled forehead with her hand, she looked with a glance of habitual apprehension along the road where the familiar cart and oxen of her tyrant might be expected soon to appear on their homeward way, and rejoiced in her little old heart that he was safe out of sight. “Yes, come in,” she said, opening the door of a small ground-floor bedroom that adjoined the apartment known in New England houses as the sink-room, and showing them a plain bed.

The worn and wasted stranger sunk down on it, and as she sunk, her whole remaining strength seemed to collapse, and something white and deathly fell, as if it had been a shadow, over her face.

“Massy to us! she’s fainted clean away,” said the poor

old woman, quiveringly. "I must jest run for the camphire."

The little boy seemed to have that unchildlike judgment and presence of mind that are the precocious development of want and sorrow. He ran to a water-pail, and, dipping his small tin cup, he dashed the water in his mother's face, and fanned her with his little torn straw hat. When the old woman returned, the invalid was breathing again, and able to take a few swallows of camphor and water which had been mixed for her.

"Sonny," said the old woman, "you are a nice little nurse,—a good boy. You jest take care now; and here's a turkey-feather fan to fan her with; and I'll get on the kettle to make her a cup of tea. We'll bring her round with a little nursing. Been walking a long way, I calculate?"

"Yes," said the boy; "she was trying to get to Boston."

"What, going afoot?"

"We didn't mind walking, the weather is so pleasant," said the boy; "and Tiny and I like walking; but mother got sick a day or two ago, and ever since she has been so tired!"

"Jes' so," said the old woman, looking compassionately on the bed. "Well, I'll make up the fire and get her some tea."

The fire was soon smoking in the great old-fashioned kitchen chimney, for the neat, labour-saving cook-stove had as yet no being; and the thin, blue smoke, curling up in the rosy sunset air, received prismatic colouring which a painter would have seized with enthusiasm.

Far otherwise, however, was its effect on the eye of Old Crab Smith, as coming up the hill, his eye detected the luminous vapour going up from his own particular chimney.

"So, burning out wood,—always burning out wood. I



told her that I wouldn't have tea got at night. These old women are crazy and bewitched after tea, and they don't care if they burn up your tables and chairs to help their messes. Why a plague can't she eat cold pork and potatoes as well as I, and drink her mug of cider? but must go to getting up her fire and biling her kettle. I'll see to that. Halloa there," he said, as he stamped up on to the porch, "what the devil are you up to now? I s'pose you think I hain't got nothing else to do but split up wood for you to burn out."

"Father, it's nothing but a little brush and a few chips, jest to bile the kettle."

"Bile the kettle, bile the kettle! Jest like yer lazy, shif'less ways. What must you be a-bilin' the kettle for?"

"Father, I jest want to make a little tea for a sick woman."

"A sick woman! What sick woman?"

"There was a poor sick woman came along this afternoon with two little children."

"Wal, I s'pose you took 'em in. I s'pose you think we keep the poorhouse, and that all the trampers belong to us. We shall have to go to the poorhouse ourselves before long, I tell ye. But you never believe anything I say. Why couldn't you 'a' sent her to the selectmen? I don't know why I must keep beggars' tavern."

"Father, father, don't speak so loud. The poor critter wan't able to stir another step, and fainted dead away, and we had to get her on to a bed."

"And we shall have her and her two brats through a fit of sickness. That's just like you. Wal, we shall all go to the poorhouse together before long, and then you'll believe what I say, won't ye? But I won't have it so. She may stay

to-night, but to-morrow morning I'll cart her over to Joe Scran's, bright and early, brats and all."

There was within hearing of this conversation a listener whose heart was dying within her,—sinking deeper and deeper at every syllable,—a few words will explain why.

A younger son of a family belonging to the English gentry had come over to America as a commissioned officer near the close of the Revolutionary war. He had persuaded to a private marriage the daughter of a poor country curate, a beautiful young girl, whom he induced to elope with him, and share the fortunes of an officer's life in America. Her parents died soon after; her husband proved a worthless, drunken, dissipated fellow; and this poor woman had been through all the nameless humiliations and agonies which beset helpless womanhood in the sole power of such a man. Submissive, gentle, trusting, praying, entreating, hoping against hope, she had borne with him many vicissitudes and reverses,—always believing that at last the love of his children, if not of her, would awaken a better nature within him. But the man steadily went downward instead of upward, and the better part of him by slow degrees died away, till he came to regard his wife and children only as so many clogs on his life, and to meditate night and day on a scheme to abandon them, and return, without their encumbrance, to his own country. It was with a distant outlook to some such result that he had from the first kept their marriage an entire secret from his own friends. When the English army, at the close of the war, re-embarked for England, he carried his cowardly scheme into execution. He had boarded his wife and children for a season in a country farmhouse in the vicinity of Boston, with the excuse of cheapness of lodgings. Then one day his wife received a letter enclosing a sum of money, and saying, in such terms as bad men can find to veil

devilish deeds, that all was over between them, and that ere she got this he should be on the ocean. The sorest hurt of all was that the letter denied the validity of their marriage; and the poor child found, to her consternation, that the marriage certificate, which she had always kept among her papers, was gone with her husband.

The first result of this letter had been a fit of sickness, wherein her little stock of money had melted almost away, and then she had risen from her bed determined to find her way to Boston, and learn, if possible, from certain persons with whom he had lodged before his departure, his address in England, that she might make one more appeal to him. But before she had walked far the sickness returned upon her, till, dizzy and faint, she had lain down, as we have described, on the bed of charity.

She had thought, ever since she received that letter, that she had reached the bottom of desolation,—that nothing could be added to her misery; but the withering, harsh sounds which reached her ear revealed a lower deep in the lowest depths. Hitherto on her short travels she had met only that kindly country hospitality which New England, from one end to the other, always has shown to the stranger. No one had refused a good meal of brown bread and rich milk to her and her children, and more often the friendly housewife, moved by her delicate appearance, had unlocked the sanctum where was deposited her precious tea-caddy, and brewed an amber cup of tea to sustain the sickly-looking wanderer. She and her children had been carried here and there, as occasion offered, a friendly mile or two, when Noah, or Job, or Sol, “hitched up the critter” to go to mill or country store. The voice of harsh, pitiless rejection smote on her ear for the first time, and it seemed to her the drop too much in her cup. She turned her face to the wall and

said, "O my God, I cannot bear this! I cannot, I cannot!" She would have said, "Let me die," but that she was tied to life by the two helpless, innocent ones who shared her misery. The poorest and most desolate mother feels that her little children are poorer and more desolate than she; and, however much her broken spirit may long for the rest of Paradise, she is held back by the thought that to abide in the flesh is needful to them. Even in her uttermost destitution the approaching shadow of the dark valley was a terror to the poor soul,—not for her own sake, but for theirs. The idea of a harsh, unpitiful world arose before her for the first time, and the thought of leaving her little ones in it unprotected was an anguish which rent her heart.

The little girl, over-weary, had eaten her supper and fallen asleep beside her, with the trusting, ignorant rest of early childhood; but her boy sat by her bedside with that look of precocious responsibility, that air of anxious thought, which seems unnatural in early childhood, and contrasted painfully with the slight childish figure, the little hands, and little voice. He was, as we have said, but nine years of age, well grown of his years, but with that style of growth which indicates delicacy of fibre rather than strength of organisation. His finely formed head, with its clustering curls of yellow hair, his large clear blue eyes, his exquisitely delicate skin, and the sensitiveness betrayed by his quivering lips, spoke of a lineage of gentle blood, and an organisation fitted rather to æsthetic and intellectual development than to sturdy material toil. The little girl, as she lay sleeping, was a beautiful picture. Her head was a wilderness of curls of a golden auburn, and the defined pencilling of the eyebrows, and the long silken veil of the lashes that fell over the sleeping eyes, the delicate polished skin, and the finely-moulded limbs, all indicated that she was one who ought to have been

among the jewels, rather than among the potsherds of this mortal life. And these were the children that she was going to leave alone, without a single friend and protector in this world. For there are intuitions that come to the sick and dying which tell them when the end is near; and as this wanderer sunk down upon her bed this night, there had fallen upon her mind a perfect certainty that she should never be carried thence till carried to the grave; and it was this which had given her soul so deadly a wrench, and caused her to cry out in such utter agony.

What happens to desolate souls, who, thus forsaken by all the world, cry out to God, is a mystery, good brother and sister, which you can never fathom until you have been exactly where they are. But certain it is that there is a very near way to God's heart, and so to the great heart of all comfort, that sometimes opens like a shaft of light between heaven and the soul, in hours when everything earthly falls away from us. A quaint old writer has said, "God keeps His choicest cordials for the time of our deepest faintings." And so it came to pass that, as this poor woman closed her eyes and prayed earnestly, there fell a strange clearness into her soul, which calmed every fear, and hushed the voice of every passion, and she lay for a season as if entranced. Words of holy writ, heard years ago in church-readings, in the hours of unconscious girlhood, now seemed to come back, borne in with a living power on her soul. It seemed almost as if a voice within was saying to her: "The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. O thou afflicted, tossed

with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

It is fashionable now to speak of words like these as fragments of ancient Hebrew literature, interesting and curious indeed, but relating to scenes, events, and states of society long gone by. But it is a most remarkable property of this old Hebrew literature, that it seems to be enchanted with a divine and living power, which strikes the nerve of individual consciousness in every desolate and suffering soul. It may have been Judah or Jerusalem ages ago to whom these words first came, but as they have travelled down for thousands of years, they have seemed to tens of thousands of sinking and desolate souls as the voice of God to them individually. They have raised the burden from thousands of crushed spirits; they have been as the dayspring to thousands of perplexed wanderers. Ah! let us treasure these old words, for as of old Jehovah chose to dwell in a tabernacle in the wilderness, and between the cherubim in the temple, so now He dwells in them; and to the simple soul that seeks for Him here He will look forth as of old from the pillar of cloud and of fire.

The poor, ill-used, forsaken, forgotten creature who lay there trembling on the verge of life felt the presence of that mighty and generous, that godlike spirit that inspired these words. And surely if Jehovah ever did speak to man, no words were ever more worthy of Him. She lay as in a blessed trance, as passage after passage from the Scriptures rolled over her mind, like bright waves from the ocean of eternal peace.

"Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. When thou passest through the waters I will



be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

The little boy, who had heard his mother's first distressful cry, sat by her anxiously watching the changes of her face as she lay there. He saw her brow gradually grow clear and calm, and every line of trouble fade from her face, as shadows and clouds roll up from the landscape at day-dawn, till at last there was a rapt, peaceful expression, an evenness of breathing, as if she slept, and were dreaming some heavenly dream. It lasted for more than an hour, and the child sat watching her with the old, grave, tender look which had come to be the fashion of his little face when he looked upon his mother.

This boy had come to this mother as a second harvest of heart, hope, and joy, after the first great love and hope of womanhood had vanished. She felt herself broken-hearted, lonely, and unloved, when her first-born son was put into her arms, and she received him as did the first mother, saying, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." To him her desolate heart had unfolded its burden of confidence from the first dawning hours of intelligence. His tiny faculties had been widened to make room for her sorrows, and his childish strength increased by her leaning. There had been hours when this boy had stood between the maniac rage of a drunken father and the cowering form of his mother, with an unchildlike courage and steadiness that seemed almost like an inspiration. In days of desertion and poverty he had gone out with their slender stock of money and made bargains such as it is pitiful to think that a little child should know how to make; and often, in moments when his mother's heart was overwhelmed, he would come to her side with the little



prayers and hymns which she had taught him, and revive her faith and courage when it seemed entirely gone.

Now, as he thought her sleeping, he began with anxious care to draw the coverlet over her, and to move his little sister back upon the bed. She opened her eyes,—large, clear blue eyes, the very mirror of his own,—and, smiling with a strange sweetness, stretched out her hand and drew him towards her. “Harry, my dear good boy, my dear, dear child, nobody knows what a comfort you have been to me.”

Then holding him from her, and looking intently in his eyes, she seemed to hesitate for words to tell him something that lay on her mind. At last she said, “Harry, say your prayers and psalms.”

The child knelt by the bed, with his hands clasped in his mother’s, and said the Lord’s Prayer, and then, standing up, repeated the beautiful psalm beginning, “The Lord is my shepherd.” Then followed a hymn, which the Methodist had made familiar in those times:—

“One there is above all others  
Well deserves the name of Friend;  
His is love beyond a brother’s,  
Costly, free, and knows no end.

“Which of all our friends, to save us,  
Could or would have shed his blood?  
But this Saviour died to have us  
Reconciled in Him to God.

“When He lived on earth abased,  
Friend of Sinners was His name;  
Now, above all glory raised,  
He rejoiceth in the same.

“Oh for grace our hearts to soften!  
Teach us, Lord, at length to love;  
We, alas! forget too often  
What a Friend we have above.”

“Harry,” said his mother, looking at him with an intense earnestness, “I want to tell you something. God, our Father,

has called me to come home to Him; and I am going. In a little while—perhaps to-morrow—I shall be gone, and you cannot find me. My soul will go to God, and they will put my body in the ground; and then you will have no friend but Jesus, and no father but the Father in heaven.”

The child looked at her with solemn, dilated gaze, not really comprehending the full mystery of that which she was trying to explain; yet the tears starting in his eyes, and the twitching of the muscles of his mouth, showed that he partly understood.

“Mother,” he said, “will papa never come back?”

“No, Harry, never. He has left us and gone away. He does not love us,—nobody loves us but our Father in heaven; but He does. You must always believe this. Now, Harry, I am going to leave your little sister to your care. You must always keep with her and take care of her, for she is a very little girl.”

“Yes, mother.”

“This is a great charge for a little boy like you; but you will live and grow up to be a man, and I want you never, as long as you live, to forget what I say to you now. Promise me, Harry, all your life to say these prayers and hymns that you have just been saying, every morning and every night. They are all I have to leave you; but if you only believe them, you will never be without comfort, no matter what happens to you. Promise me, dear.”

“Yes, mother, I will.”

“And, Harry, no matter *what* happens, never doubt that God loves you,—never forget that you have a Friend in heaven. Whenever you have a trouble, just pray to Him, and He will help you. Promise this.”

“Yes, mother.”

“Now lie down by me, I am very, very tired.”

The little boy lay down by his mother; she threw her arms around him, and both sunk to sleep.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Miss Asphyxia.

“THERE won't be no great profit in this 'ere these ten year.”

The object denominated “this 'ere” was the golden-haired child whom we have spoken of before,—the little girl whose mother lay dying. That mother is dead now; and the thing to be settled is, What is to be done with the children? The morning after the scene we have described looked in at the window and saw the woman with a pale, placid face, sleeping as one who has found eternal rest, and the two weeping children striving in vain to make her hear.

Old Crab had been up early in his design of “carting the 'hull lot over to the poor-house,” but made a solemn pause when his wife drew him into the little chamber. Death has a strange dignity, and whatsoever child of Adam he lays his hand on is for the time ennobled,—removed from the region of the earthly and commonplace to that of the spiritual and mysterious. And when Crab found, by searching the little bundle of the deceased, that there was actually money enough in it to buy a coffin and pay 'Zekiel Stebbins for digging the grave, he began to look on the woman as having made a respectable and edifying end, and the whole affair as coming to a better issue than he had feared.

And so the event was considered in the neighbourhood, in a melancholy way, rather an interesting and auspicious one. It gave something to talk about in a region where exciting topics were remarkably scarce. The Reverend Jabez Periwinkle found in it a moving Providence which started him

favourably on a sermon, and the funeral had been quite a windfall to all the gossips about; and now remained the question, What was to be done with the children?

“Now that we are diggin’ the ’taters,” said old Crab, “that ’ere chap might be good for suthin’, pickin’ on ’em out o’ the hills. Poor folks like us can’t afford to keep nobody jest to look at, and so he’ll have to step spry and work smart to airn his keep.” And so at early dawn, the day after the funeral, the little boy was roused up and carried into the fields with the men.

But “this ’ere”—that is to say, a beautiful little girl of seven years—had greatly puzzled the heads of the worthy gossips of the neighbourhood. Miss Asphyxia Smith, the elder sister of old Crab, was at this moment turning the child round, and examining her through a pair of large horn spectacles, with a view to “taking her to raise,” as she phrased it.

Now all Miss Asphyxia’s ideas of the purpose and aim of human existence were comprised in one word,—work. She was herself a working machine, always wound up and going,—up at early cock-crowing, and busy till bedtime, with a rampant and fatiguing industry that never paused for a moment. She conducted a large farm by the aid of a hired man, and drove a flourishing dairy, and was universally respected in the neighbourhood as a smart woman.

Latterly, as her young cousin, who had shared the toils of the house with her, had married and left her, Miss Asphyxia had talked of “takin’ a child from the poor-house, and so raisin’ her own help;” and it was with the view of this “raisin’ her help,” that she was thus turning over and inspecting the little article which we have spoken of.

Apparently she was somewhat puzzled, and rather scan-

dalised, that nature should evidently have expended so much in a merely ornamental way on an article which ought to have been made simply for service. She brushed up a handful of the clustering curls in her large, bony hand, and said, with a sniff, "These'll have to come right off to begin with; gracious me, what a tangle!"

"Mother always brushed them out every day," said the child.

"And who do you suppose is going to spend an hour every day brushing your hair, Miss Pert?" said Miss Asphyxia. "That ain't what I take ye for, I tell you. You've got to learn to work for your living; and you ought to be thankful if I'm willing to show you how."

The little girl did not appear particularly thankful. She bent her soft, pencilled eyebrows in a dark frown, and her great hazel eyes had gathering in them a cloud of sullen gloom. Miss Asphyxia did not mind her frowning,—perhaps did not notice it. She had it settled in her mind, as a first principle, that children never liked anything that was good for them, and that, of course, if she took a child, it would have to be made to come to her by forcible proceedings promptly instituted. So she set her little subject before her by seizing her by her two shoulders and squaring her round and looking in her face, and opened direct conversation with her in the following succinct manner.

"What's your name?"

Then followed a resolved and gloomy silence, as the large bright eyes surveyed, with a sort of defiant glance, the inquisitor.

"Don't you hear?" said Miss Asphyxia, giving her a shake.

"Don't be so harsh with her," said the little old woman.

"Say, my little dear, tell Miss Asphyxia your name," she added, taking the child's hand.

"Eglantine Percival," said the little girl, turning towards the old woman, as if she disdained to answer the other party in the conversation.

"Wh—a—t?" said Miss Asphyxia. "If there ain't the beatin'est name ever I heard. Well, I tell you *I* ain't got time to fix *my* mouth to say all that 'ere every time I want ye, now I tell ye."

"Mother and Harry called me Tina," said the child.

"Teny! Well, I should think so," said Miss Asphyxia. "That showed she'd got a grain o' sense left, anyhow. She's tol'able strong and well-limbed for her age," added that lady, feeling of the child's arms and limbs; "her flesh is solid. I think she'll make a strong woman, only put her to work early and keep her at it. I could rub out clothes at the wash-tub afore I was at her age."

"Oh, she can do considerable many little chores," said old Crab's wife.

"Yes," said Miss Asphyxia; "there can a good deal be got out of a child if you keep at 'em, hold 'em in tight, and never let 'em have their head a minute; push right hard on behind 'em, and you get considerable. That's the way I was raised."

"But I want to play," said the little girl, bursting out in a sobbing storm of mingled fear and grief.

"Want to play, do you? Well, you must get over that. Don't you know that that's as bad as stealing? You haven't got any money, and if you eat folks's bread and butter, you've got to work to pay for it; and if folks buy your clothes, you've got to work to pay for them."

"But I've got some clothes of my own," persisted the child, determined not to give up her case entirely.

"Well, so you have; but there ain't no sort of wear in 'em," said Miss Asphyxia, turning to Mrs. Smith. "Them two dresses o' hern might answer for Sundays and sich, but I 'll have to make her up a regular linsey working dress this fall, and check aprons; and she must set right about knitting every minute she isn't doing anything else. Did you ever learn how to knit?"

"No," said the child.

"Or to sew?" said Miss Asphyxia.

"Yes; mother taught me to sew," said the child.

"No! Yes! Hain't you learned manners? Do you say yes and no to people?"

The child stood a moment, swelling with suppressed feeling, and at last she opened her great eyes full on Miss Asphyxia, and said, "I don't like you. You ain't pretty, and I won't go with you."

"Oh now," said Mrs. Smith, "little girls mustn't talk so; that's naughty."

"Don't like me?—ain't I pretty?" said Miss Asphyxia, with a short, grim laugh. "Maybe I ain't; but I know what I'm about, and you'd as good know it first as last. I'm going to take ye right out with me in the waggin, and you'd best not have none of your cuttin's up. I keep a stick at home for naughty girls. Why, where do you suppose you're going to get your livin' if I don't take you?"

"I want to live with Harry," said the child, sobbing. "Where is Harry?"

"Harry's to work,—and there's where he's got to be," said Miss Asphyxia. "He's got to work with the men in the fields, and you've got to come home and work with me."

"I want to stay with Harry,—Harry takes care of me," said the child, in a piteous tone.



Old Mother Smith now toddled to her milk-room, and, with a melting heart, brought out a doughnut. "There now, eat that," she said; "and mebbe, if you're good, Miss Asphyxia will bring you down here sometime."

"Oh, laws, Polly, you allers was a fool!" said Miss Asphyxia. "It's all for the child's good, and what's the use of fussin' on her up? She'll come to it when she knows she's got to. 'Tain't no more than I was put to at her age, only the child's been fooled with and babied."

The little one refused the doughnut, and seemed to gather herself up in silent gloom.

"Come, now, don't stand sulking; let me put your bonnet on," said Miss Asphyxia, in a brisk, metallic voice. "I can't be losin' the best part of my day with this nonsense!" And forthwith she clawed up the child in her bony grasp, as easily as an eagle might truss a chick-sparrow.

"Be a good little girl, now," said the little gray woman, who felt a strange swelling and throbbing in her poor old breast. To be sure, she knew she was a fool; her husband had told her so at least three times every day for years; and Miss Asphyxia only confirmed what she accepted familiarly as the truth. But yet she could not help these unprofitable longings to coddle and comfort something,—to do some of those little motherly tendernesses for children which go to no particular result, only to make them happy; so she ran out after the waggon with a tempting seed-cake, and forced it into the child's hand.

"Take it, do take it," she said; "eat it, and be a good girl, and do just as she tells you to."

"I'll see to that," said Miss Asphyxia, as she gathered up the reins and gave a cut to her horse, which started that quadruped from a dream of green grass into a most animated pace. Every creature in her service—horse, cow, and pig—

knew at once the touch of Miss Asphyxia, and the necessity of being up and doing when she was behind them; and the horse, who under other hands would have been the slowest and most reflective of beasts, now made the little waggon spin and bounce over the rough, stony road, so that the child's short legs flew up in the air every few moments.

"You must hold on tight," was Miss Asphyxia's only comment on this circumstance. "If you fall out, you'll break your neck!"

It was a glorious day of early autumn, the sun shining as only an autumn sun knows how to shine. The blue fields of heaven were full of fleecy flocks of clouds, drifting hither and thither at their lazy will. The golden-rod and the aster hung their plumage over the rough, rocky road; and now and then it wound through a sombre piece of woods, where scarlet sumachs and maples flashed out among the gloomy green hemlocks with a solemn and gorgeous light. So very fair was the day, and so full of life and beauty was the landscape, that the child, who came of a beauty-loving lineage, felt her little heart drawn out from under its burden of troubles, and springing and bounding with that elastic habit of happiness which seems hard to kill in children.

Once she laughed out as a squirrel, with his little chops swelled with a nut on each side, sat upon the fence and looked after them, and then whisked away behind the stone wall; and once she called out, "Oh, how pretty!" at a splendid clump of blue fringed gentian, which stood holding up its hundred azure vases by the wayside. "Oh, I do wish I could get some of that!" she cried out, impulsively.

"Some of what?" said Miss Asphyxia.

"Oh, those *beautiful* flowers!" said the child, leaning far out to look back.

"Oh, that's nothing but gentian," said Miss Asphyxia;

“can't stop for that. Them blows is good to dry for weakness,” she added. “By and by, if you're good, mebbe I'll let you get some on 'em.”

Miss Asphyxia had one word for all flowers. She called them all “blows,” and they were divided in her mind, in a manner far more simple than any botanical system, into two classes; namely, blows that were good to dry, and blows that were not. Elder-blow, catnip, hoarhound, hardhack, gentian, ginseng, and various other vegetable tribes, she knew well and had a great respect for; but all the other little weeds that put on obtrusive colours and flaunted in the summer breeze, without any pretensions to further usefulness, Miss Asphyxia completely ignored. It would not be describing her state to say she had a contempt for them: she simply never saw or thought of them at all. The idea of beauty as connected with any of them never entered her mind,—it did not exist there.

The young cousin who shared her housework had, to be sure, planted a few flowers in a corner of the garden; there were some peonies and pinks and a rose-bush, which often occupied a spare hour of the girl's morning or evening; but Miss Asphyxia watched these operations with a sublime contempt, and only calculated the loss of potatoes and carrots caused by this unproductive beauty. Since the marriage of this girl, Miss Asphyxia had often spoken to her man about “clearing out them things;” but somehow he always managed to forget it, and the thriftless beauties still remained.

It wanted but about an hour of noon when Miss Asphyxia set down the little girl on the clean-scrubbed floor of a great kitchen, where everything was even desolately orderly and neat. She swung her at once into a chair. “Sit there,” she said, “till I'm ready to see to ye.” And then, marching up

to her own room, she laid aside her bonnet, and, coming down plunged into active preparations for the dinner.

An irrepressible feeling of desolation came over the child. The elation produced by the ride died away; and, as she sat dangling her heels from the chair, and watching the dry, grim form of Miss Asphyxia, a sort of terror of her began slowly to usurp the place of that courage which had at first inspired the child to rise up against the assertion of so uncongenial a power.

All the strange, dreadful events of the last few days mingled themselves, in her childish mind, in a weird mass of uncomprehended gloom and mystery. Her mother, so changed,—cold, stiff, lifeless, neither smiling nor speaking nor looking at her; the people coming to the house, and talking and singing and praying, and then putting her in a box in the ground, and saying that she was dead; and then, right upon that, to be torn from her brother, to whom she had always looked for protection and counsel,—all this seemed a weird, inexplicable cloud coming over her heart and darkening all her little life. Where was Harry? Why did he let them take her? Or perhaps equally dreadful people had taken him, and would never bring him back again.

There was a tall black clock in a corner of the kitchen, that kept its invariable monotone of tick-tack, tick-tack, with a persistence that made her head swim; and she watched the quick, decisive movements of Miss Asphyxia with somewhat of the same respectful awe with which one watches the course of a locomotive engine.

It was late for Miss Asphyxia's dinner preparations, but she instituted prompt measures to make up for lost time. She flew about the kitchen with such long-armed activity and fearful celerity, that the child began instinctively to duck and

bob her little head when she went by, lest she should hit her and knock her off her chair.

Miss Asphyxia raked open the fire in the great kitchen chimney, and built it up with a liberal supply of wood; then she rattled into the back room, and a sound was heard of a bucket descending into a well with such frantic haste as only an oaken bucket under Miss Asphyxia's hands could be frightened into. Back she came with a stout black iron tea-kettle, which she hung over the fire; and then, flopping down a ham on the table, she cut off slices with a martial and determined air, as if she would like to see the ham try to help itself; and, before the child could fairly see what she was doing, the slices of ham were in the frying-pan over the coals, the ham hung up in its place, the knife wiped and put out of sight, and the table drawn out into the middle of the floor, and invested with a cloth for dinner.

During these operations the child followed every movement with awe-struck eyes, and studied with trembling attention every feature of this wonderful woman.

Miss Asphyxia was tall and spare. Nature had made her, as she often remarked of herself, entirely for use. She had allowed for her muscles no cushioned repose of fat, no redundant smoothness of outline. There was nothing to her but good, strong, solid bone, and tough, wiry, well-strung muscle. She was past fifty, and her hair was already well streaked with gray, and so thin that, when tightly combed and tied, it still showed bald cracks, not very slightly to the eye. The only thought that Miss Asphyxia ever had in relation to the *coiffure* of her hair was that it was to be got out of her way. Hair she considered principally as something that might get into people's eyes, if not properly attended to; and accordingly, at a very early hour every morning, she tied all hers in a very tight knot, and then secured

it by a horn comb on the top of her head. To tie this knot so tightly that, once done, it should last all day, was Miss Asphyxia's only art of the toilet, and she tried her work every morning by giving her head a shake, before she left her looking-glass, 'not unlike that of an unruly cow. If this process did not start the horn comb from its moorings, Miss Asphyxia was well pleased. For the rest, her face was dusky and wilted,—guarded by gaunt, high cheek-bones, and watched over by a pair of small gray eyes of unsleeping vigilance. The shaggy eyebrows that overhung them were grizzled, like her hair.

It would not be proper to say that Miss Asphyxia looked ill-tempered; but her features could never, by any stretch of imagination, be supposed to wear an expression of tenderness. They were set in an austere, grim gravity, whose lines had become more deeply channelled by every year of her life. As related to her fellow-creatures, she was neither passionate nor cruel. We have before described her as a working machine, for ever wound up to high-pressure working-point; and this being her nature, she trod down and crushed whatever stood in the way of her work, with as little compunction as if she had been a steam-engine or a power-loom.

Miss Asphyxia had a full conviction of what a recent pleasant writer has denominated the total depravity of matter. She was not given to many words, but it might often be gathered from her brief discourses that she had always felt herself, so to speak, sword in hand against a universe where everything was running to disorder,—everything was tending to slackness, shiftlessness, unthrift, and she alone was left on the earth to keep things in their places. Her hired men were always too late up in the morning,—always shirking,—always taking too long a nap at noon; every-



body was watching to cheat her in every bargain; her horse, cow, pigs,—all her possessions,—were ready at the slightest winking of her eye, or relaxing of her watch, to fall into all sorts of untoward ways and gyrations; and therefore she slept, as it were, in her armour, and spent her life as a sentinel on duty.

In taking a child, she had had her eyes open only to one patent fact,—that a child was an animal who would always be wanting to play, and that she must make all her plans and calculations to keep her from playing. To this end she had beforehand given out word to her brother, that, if she took the girl, the boy must be kept away. “Got enough on my hands now, without havin’ a boy trainin’ round my house, and upsettin’ all creation,” said the grim virgin.

“Wal, wal,” said Old Crab, “’taint best; they’ll be a consultin’ together, and cuttin’ up didos. I’ll keep the boy tight enough, I tell you.”

Little enough was the dinner that the child ate that day. There were two hulking, square-shouldered men at the table, who stared at her with great round eyes like oxen; and so, though Miss Asphyxia dumped down Indian pudding, ham, and fried potatoes before her, the child’s eating was scarcely that of a blackbird.

Marvellous to the little girl was the celerity with which Miss Asphyxia washed and cleared up the dinner dishes. How the dishes rattled, the knives and forks clinked, as she scraped, and piled, and washed, and wiped, and put everything in a trice back into such perfect place, that it looked as if nothing had ever been done on the premises!

After this Miss Asphyxia produced thimble, thread, needle, and scissors, and drawing out of a closet a bale of coarse blue home-made cloth, proceeded to measure the little girl for a petticoat and short gown of the same. This being



done to her mind, she dumped her into a chair beside her, and, putting a brown towel into her hands to be hemmed, she briefly said, "There, keep to work;" while she, with great despatch and resolution, set to work on the little garments aforesaid.

The child once or twice laid down her work to watch the chickens who came up round the door, or to note a bird which flew by with a little ripple of song. The first time, Miss Asphyxia only frowned and said, "Tut, tut." The second time, there came three thumps of Miss Asphyxia's thimble down on the little head, with the admonition, "Mind your work." The child now began to cry, but Miss Asphyxia soon put an end to that by displaying a long birch rod, with a threatening movement, and saying, succinctly, "Stop that, this minute, or I'll whip you." And the child was so certain of this that she swallowed her grief and stitched away as fast as her little fingers could go.

As soon as supper was over that night, Miss Asphyxia seized upon the child, and taking her to a tub in the sink-room, proceeded to divest her of her garments and subject her to a most thorough abluion.

"I'm goin' to give you one good scrubbin' to start with," said Miss Asphyxia; and, truth to say, no word could more thoroughly express the character of the abluion than the term "scrubbing." The poor child was deluged with soap and water, in mouth, nose, ears, and eyes, while the great bony hands rubbed and splashed, twisted her arms, turned her ears wrong side out, and dashed on the water with unsparing vigour. Nobody can tell the torture which can be inflicted on a child in one of these vigorous old New England washings, which used to make Saturday night a terror in good families. But whatever they were, the little martyr was by this time so thoroughly impressed with the awful reality

of Miss Asphyxia's power over her, that she endured all with only a few long-drawn and convulsed sighs, and an inaudible "Oh dear!"

When well scrubbed and wiped, Miss Asphyxia put on a coarse homespun nightgown, and pinning a cloth round the child's neck, began with her scissors the work of cutting off her hair. Snip, snip, went the fatal shears, and down into the towel fell bright curls, once the pride of a mother's heart, till finally the small head was despoiled completely. Then Miss Asphyxia, shaking up a bottle of camphor, proceeded to rub some vigorously upon the child's head. "There," she said, "that's to keep ye from catchin' cold."

She then proceeded to the kitchen, raked open the fire, and shook the golden curls into the bed of embers, and stood grimly over them while they seethed and twisted and writhed, as if they had been living things suffering a fiery torture, meanwhile picking diligently at the cloth that had contained them that no stray hair might escape.

"I wonder now," she said to herself, "if any of this will rise and get into the next pudding?" She spoke with a spice of bitterness, poor woman, as if it would be just the way things usually went on, if it did.

She buried the fire carefully, and then opening the door of a small bedroom adjoining, which displayed a single bed, she said, "Now, get into bed."

The child immediately obeyed, thankful to hide herself under the protecting folds of a blue checked coverlet, and feeling that at last the dreadful Miss Asphyxia would leave her to herself.

Miss Asphyxia clapped to the door, and the child drew a long breath. In a moment, however, the door flew open. Miss Asphyxia had forgotten something. "Can you say your prayers?" she demanded.

"Yes, ma'am," said the child.

"Say'em, then," said Miss Asphyxia; and bang went the door again.

"There, now, if I hain't done up my duty to that child, then I don't know," said Miss Asphyxia.

## CHAPTER IX.

### Harry's First Day's Work.

IT was the fashion of olden times to consider children only as children pure and simple; not as having any special and individual nature which required special and individual adaptation, but as being simply so many little creatures to be washed, dressed, schooled, fed, and whipped according to certain general and well-understood rules.

The philosophy of modern society is showing to parents and educators how delicate and how varied is their task; but in the days we speak of nobody had thought of these shadings and variations. It is perhaps true, that in that very primitive and simple state of society there were fewer of those individual peculiarities which are the result of the stimulated brains and nervous systems of modern society.

Be that as it may, the little parish of Needmore saw nothing in the fact that two orphan children had fallen into the hands of Crab Smith and his sister, Miss Asphyxia, which appeared to its moral sense as at all unsuitable. To be sure, there was a suppressed shrug of the shoulders at the idea of the little fair-haired, pleasant-mannered boy being given up to old Crab. People said to each other, with a knowing grin, "That 'ere boy'd have to toe the mark pretty handsome; but then, he might do wus. He'd have enough to eat and drink anyhow, and old Ma'am Smith, she'd mother him. As to Miss

Asphyxia and the girl, why, 'twas jest the thing. She was jest the hand to raise a smart girl."

In fact, we are not certain that Miss Asphyxia, with a few modifications and fashionable shadings suitable for our modern society, is not, after all, the ideal personage who would get all votes as just the proper person to take charge of an orphan asylum,—would be recommended to widowers with large families as just the woman to bring up their children.

Efficiency has always been, in our New England, the golden calf before which we have fallen down and worshipped. The great granite formation of physical needs and wants that underlie life in a country with a hard soil and a severe climate, give an intensity to our valuation of what pertains to the working of the direct and positive force that controls, the physical—and can keep in constant order the eating, drinking, and wearing of this mortal body—is always asserting itself in every department of life as the true wisdom.

But what, in fact, were the two little children who had been thus seized on and appropriated?

The boy was, as we have described, of a delicate and highly nervous organisation—sensitive, æsthetic—evidently fitted by nature more for the poet or scholar than for the rough grind of physical toil. There had been superinduced on this temperament a precocious development from the circumstance of his having been made, during the earliest years of his consciousness, the companion of his mother. Nothing unfolds a child faster than being thus taken into the companionship of older minds in the first years of life. He was naturally one of those manly, good-natured, even-tempered children that are the delight of nurses and the staff and stay of mothers. Early responsibility and sorrow, and the religious teachings of his mother, had awakened the spiritual part of

his nature to a higher consciousness than usually exists in childhood. There was about him a steady, uncorrupted goodness and faithfulness of nature, a simple, direct truthfulness, and a loyal habit of prompt obedience to elders, which made him one of those children likely, in every position of child-life, to be favourites, and to run a smooth course.

The girl, on the contrary, had in her all the elements of a little bundle of womanhood, born to rule and command in a pure womanly way. She was affectionate, gay, pleasure-loving, self-willed, imperious, intensely fond of approbation, with great stores of fancy, imagination, and an under-heat of undeveloped passion that would, in future life, give warmth and colour to all her thoughts, as a volcanic soil is said to brighten the hues of flowers and warm the flavour of grapes. She had, too, that capacity of secretiveness which enabled her to carry out the dictates of a strong will, and an intuitive sense of where to throw a tendril or strike a little fibre of persuasion or coaxing, which comes early to those fair parasites who are to live by climbing upon others, and to draw their hues and sweetness from the warmth of other hearts. The moral and religious faculties were as undeveloped in her as in a squirrel or a robin. She had lived, in fact, between her sorrowing mother and her thoughtful little brother, as a beautiful pet, whose little gladsome ways and gay pranks were the only solace of their poverty. Even the father, in good-natured hours, had caressed her, played with her, told her stories, and allowed all her little audacities and liberties with an indulgence that her brother could not dare to hope for. No service or self-denial had ever been required of her. She had been served, with a delicate and exact care, by both mother and brother.

Such were the two little specimens of mortality which the

town of Needmore thought well provided for when they were consigned to Crab Smith and Miss Asphyxia.

The first day after the funeral of his mother, the boy had been called up before light in the morning, and been off at sunrise to the fields with the men; but he had gone with a heart of manly enterprise, feeling as if he were beginning life on his own account, and meaning, with straightforward simplicity, to do his best.

He assented to old Crab's harsh orders with such obedient submission, and set about the work given him with such a steady, manly patience and good-will, as to win for himself, at the outset, golden opinions from the hired men, and to excite in old Crab that discontented satisfaction which he felt in an employee in whom he could find nothing to scold. The work of merely picking up the potatoes from the hills which the men opened was so very simple as to give no chance for mistake or failure, and the boy was so cheerful and unintermitting in his work that no fault could be found under that head. He was tired enough, it is true, at night; but, as he rode home in the cart, he solaced himself with the idea that he was beginning to be a man, and that he should work and support his sister,—and he had many things to tell her of the result of his first day's labour. He wondered that she did not come to meet him as the cart drove up to the house, and his first inquiry, when he saw the friendly old woman, was, "Where is Tina?"

"She's gone to live with *his* sister," said Mrs. Smith, in an undertone, pointing to her husband in the back yard. "Asphyxia's took her to raise."

"To what?" said the boy, timidly.

"Why, to fetch her up,—teach her to work," said the little old woman. "But come, sonny, go wash your hands to the

sink. Dear me! why, you've fairly took the skin off your fingers."

"I'm not much used to work," said the boy, "but I don't mind it." And he washed carefully the little hands, which, sure enough, had the skin somewhat abraded on the finger-ends.

"Do ye good," said old Crab. "Mustn't mind that. Can't have no lily-fingered boys workin' for me."

The child had not thought of complaining; but as soon as he was alone with Mrs. Smith, he came to her confidentially and said, "How far is it to where Tina lives?"

"Well, it's the best part of two miles, I calculate."

"Can't I go over there to-night and see her?"

"Dear heart! no, you can't. Why, your little back must ache now, and he'll have you routed up by four o'clock in the morning."

"I'm not so very tired," said the boy; "but I want to see Tina. If you'll show me the way, I'll go."

"Oh, well, you see, they won't let you," said the old woman, confidentially. "They are a ha'sh pair of 'em, him and Sphyxy are; and they've settled it that you ain't to see each other no more, for fear you'd get to playin' and idlin'."

The blood flushed into the boy's face, and he breathed short. Something stirred within him, such as makes slavery bitter, as he said, "But that isn't right. She's my only sister, and my mother told me to take care of her; and I *ought* to see her sometimes."

"Lordy massy!" said Goody Smith; "when you're with some folks, it don't make no difference what's right and what ain't. You've jest got to do as ye ken. It won't do to rile *him*, I tell you. He's awful, once get his back up." And Goody Smith shook her little old head mysteriously, and



hushed the boy, as she heard her husband's heavy tread coming in from the barn.

The supper of cold beef and pork, potatoes, turnips, and hard cider, which was now dispensed at the farmhouse, was ample for all purposes of satisfying hunger; and the little Harry, tired as he was, ate with a vigorous relish. But his mind was still dwelling on his sister.

After supper was over he followed Goody Smith into her milk-room. "Please do ask *him* to let me go and see Tina," he said, persuasively.

"Laws a massy, ye poor dear! ye don't know the critter. If *I* ask him to do a thing, he's all the more set agin it. I found out that 'ere years ago. He never does nothin' *I* ask him to. But never mind; some of these days, we'll try and contrive it. When he's gone to mill, I'll speak to the men, and tell 'em to let ye slip off. But then the pester on't is, there's Sphyxy; she's allers wide awake, and wouldn't let a boy come near her house no more than ef he was bull-dog."

"Why, what harm do boys do?" said the child, to whom this view presented an entirely new idea.

"Oh, well, she's an old maid, and kind o' set in her ways; and it ain't easy gettin' round Sphyxy; but I'll try and contrive it. Sometimes I can get round 'em, and get something done, when they don't know nothin' about it; but it's drefful hard gettin' things done."

The views thus presented to the child's mind of the cowering, deceptive policy in which the poor old woman's whole married life had been spent, gave him much to think of after he had gone to his bedroom.

He sat down on his little, lonely bed, and began trying to comprehend in his own mind the events of the last few days. He recalled his mother's last conversation with him. All had happened just as she had said. She was gone, just as

she had told him, and left him and little Tina alone in the world. Then he remembered his promise, and, kneeling down by his bedside, repeated the simple litany—psalm, prayer, and hymn—which his mother had left him as her only parting gift. The words soothed his little lonesome heart; and he thought what his mother said,—he recalled the look of her dying eyes as she said it,—“Never doubt that God loves you, whatever happens; and, if you have any trouble, pray to Him.” Upon this thought, he added to his prayer these words, “O dear Father! they have taken away Tina; and she’s a very little girl, and cannot work, as I can. Please do take care of Tina, and make them let me go and see her.”

## CHAPTER X.

### Miss Asphyxia’s System.

WHEN Miss Asphyxia shut the door finally on little Tina, the child began slowly to gather up her faculties from the stunning, benumbing influence of the change which had come over her life.

In former days her father had told her stories of little girls that were carried of to giants’ houses, and there maltreated and dominated over in very dreadful ways; and Miss Asphyxia presented herself to her as one of these giants. She was so terribly strong, the child felt instinctively, in every limb, that there was no getting away from her. Her eyes were so keen and searching, her voice so sharp, all her movements so full of a vigour that might be felt, that any chance of getting the better of her by indirect ways seemed hopelessly small. If she should try to run away to find Harry, she was quite sure that Miss Asphyxia could make a long arm that would reach her before she had gone far; and then what she would do to her was a matter that she dared not

think of. Even when she was not meaning to be cross to her, but merely seized and swung her into a chair, she had such a grip that it almost gave pain; and what would it be if she seized her in wrath? No; there was evidently no escape; and, as the thought came over the child, she began to cry,—first sobbing, and then, as her agitation increased, screaming audibly.

Miss Asphyxia opened the door. "Stop that!" she said. "What under the canopy ails ye?"

"I—want—Harry!" said the child.

"Well, you can't have Harry; and I won't have ye bawling. Now shut up and go to sleep, or I'll whip you!" And, with that, Miss Asphyxia turned down the bedclothes with a resolute hand.

"I will be good,—I will stop," said the child, in mortal terror, suppressing the sobs that seemed to tear her little frame.

Miss Asphyxia waited a moment, and then, going out, shut the door, and went on making up the child's stuff gown outside.

"That 'ere's goin' to be a regular limb," she said; "but I must begin as I'm goin' to go on with her, and mebbe she'll amount to suthin' by and by. A child's pretty much dead loss the first three or four years; but after that they more 'n pay, if they're fetched up right."

"Mebbe that 'ere child's lonesome," said Sol Peters, Miss Asphyxia's hired man, who sat in the kitchen corner, putting in a new hoe-handle.

"Lonesome!" said Miss Asphyxia, with a sniff of contempt.

"All sorts of young critters is," said Sol, undismayed by this sniff. "Puppies is. 'Member how our Spot yelped when I fust got him? Kept me 'wake the biggest part of one night.

And kittens mew when ye take 'em from the cats. Ye see they's used to other critters; and it's sort o' cold like, bein' alone is."

"Well, she'll have to get used to it, anyhow," said Miss Asphyxia. "I guess't won't kill her. Ef a child has enough to eat and drink, and plenty of clothes, and somebody to take care of 'em, they ain't very bad off, if they be lonesome."

Sol, though a big-fisted, hard-handed fellow, had still rather a soft spot under his jacket in favour of all young, defenceless animals, and the sound of the little girl's cry had gone right to this spot. So he still revolved the subject, as he leisurely turned and scraped with a bit of broken glass the hoe-handle that he was elaborating. After a considerable pause, he shut up one eye, looked along his hoe-handle at Miss Asphyxia, as if he were taking aim, and remarked, "That 'ere boy 's a nice, stiddy little chap; and mebbe, if he could come down here once in a while after work-hours, 'twould kind o' reconcile her."

"I tell you what, Solomon Peters," said Miss Asphyxia, "I'd jest as soon have the great red dragon in the Revelations a comin' down on my house as a boy! Ef I don't work hard enough now, I'd like to know, without havin' a boy raound raisin' general Cain. Don't tell me! I'll find work enough to keep that 'ere child from bein' lonesome. Lonesome!—there didn't nobody think of no such things when I was little. I was jest put right along, and no remarks made; and was made to mind when I was spoken to, and to take things as they come. Oh, I'll find her work enough to keep her mind occupied, I promise ye."

Sol did not in the least doubt that, for Miss Asphyxia's reputation in the region was perfectly established. She was spoken of with applause under such titles as "a staver," "a

pealer," "a roarer to work;" and Sol himself had an awful sense of responsibility to her in this regard. He had arrived at something of a late era in single life, and had sometimes been sportively jugged by his associates, at the village store, as to his opportunity of becoming master of Miss Asphyxia's person and property by matrimonial overtures; to all which he summarily responded by declaring that "a hoss might as soon go a courtin' to the hosswhip as he court Miss Sphyxy." As to Miss Asphyxia, when rallied on the same subject, she expressed her views of the matrimonial estate in a sentence more terse and vigorous than elegant,—that "she knew t' much to put her nose into hot swill." Queen Elizabeth might have expressed her mind in a more courtly way, but certainly with no more decision.

The little head and heart in the next room were full of the rudiments of thoughts, desires, feelings, imaginations, and passions, which either had never lived in Miss Asphyxia's nature, or had died so long ago that not a trace or memory of them was left. If she had had even the dawnings of certain traits and properties, she might have doubted of her ability to bring up a child; but she had not.

Yet Miss Asphyxia's faults in this respect were not so widely different from the practice of the hard, rustic inhabitants of Needmore as to have prevented her getting employment as a district school teacher for several terms, when she was about twenty years of age. She was held to be a "smart," economical teacher, inasmuch as she was able to hold the winter term, and thrash the very biggest boys, and, while she did the duty of a man, received only the wages of a woman,—a recommendation in female qualification which has not ceased to be available in our modern days. Gradually, by incredible industries, by a faculty of pinching, saving, and accumulating hard to conceive of, Miss Asphyxia had

laid up money till she had actually come to be the possessor of a small but neat house, and a farm and dairy in excellent condition; and she regarded herself, therefore, and was regarded by others, as a model for imitation. Did she have the least doubt that she was eminently fitted to bring up a girl? I trow not.

Miss Asphyxia, in her early childhood, had been taken to raise in the same manner that she had taken this child. She had been trained to early rising, and constant, hard, unintermitted work, without thought of respite or amusement. During certain seasons of the year she had been sent to the district school, where, always energetic in whatever she took in hand, she always stood at the head of the school in the few arts of scholarship in those days taught. She could write a good round hand; she could cipher with quickness and adroitness; she had learned by heart all the rules of "Murray's Grammar," notwithstanding the fact that, from the habits of early childhood, she habitually set at naught every one of them in her daily conversation,—always strengthening all her denials with those good, hearty double negatives which help out French and Italian sentences, and are unjustly denied to the purists in genteel English. How much of the droll quaintness of Yankee dialect comes from the stumbling of human nature into those racy mistakes will never be known.

Perhaps my readers may have turned over a great flat stone sometime in their rural rambles, and found under it little clovers and tufts of grass pressed to earth, flat, white, and bloodless, but still growing, stretching, creeping towards the edges, where their plant instinct tells them there is light and deliverance. The kind of life that the little Tina led, under the care of Miss Asphyxia, resembled that of these poor clovers. It was all shut down and repressed, but grow-

ing still. She was roused at the first glimmer of early dawn, dressing herself in the dark, and, coming out, set the table for breakfast. From that time through the day, one task followed another in immediate succession, with the sense of the ever-driving Miss Asphyxia behind her.

Once, in the course of her labours, she let fall a saucer, while Miss Asphyxia, by good fortune, was out of the room. To tell of her mischance, and expose herself to the awful consequences of her anger, was more than her childish courage was equal to; and, with a quick adroitness, she slipped the broken fragments in a crevice between the kitchen doorstep and the house, and endeavoured to look as if nothing had occurred. Alas! she had not counted on Miss Asphyxia's unsleeping vigilance of hearing. She was down-stairs in a trice.

"What have you been breaking?"

"Nothing, ma'am," was the trembling response.

"Don't tell me! I heard something fall."

"I think it must have been the tongs," said the little girl, —not over-wise or ingenious in her subterfuge.

"Tongs! likely story," said Miss Asphyxia, keenly running her eye over the cups and saucers.

"One, two,—here's one of the saucers gone. What have you done with it?"

The child, now desperate with fear, saw no refuge but in persistent denial, till Miss Asphyxia, seizing her, threatened immediate whipping if she did not at once confess.

"I dropped a saucer," at last said the frightened child.

"You did, you little slut!" said Miss Asphyxia, administering a box on her ear. "Where is it? What have you done with the pieces?"

"I dropped them down by the door-step," said the sobbing culprit.



Miss Asphyxia soon fished them up, and held them up in awful judgment. "You've been telling me a lie,—a naughty, wicked lie," she said. "I'll soon cure you of lying. I'll scour your mouth out for you." And forthwith, taking a rag with some soap and sand, she grasped the child's head under her arm, and rubbed the harsh mixture through her mouth with a vengeful energy. "There, now, see if you'll tell me another lie," said she, pushing her from her. "Don't you know where liars go to, you naughty, wicked girl? 'All liars shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone,'—that's what the Bible says; and you may thank me for keeping you from going there. Now go and get up the potatoes and wash 'em, and don't let me get another lie out of your mouth as long as you live."

There was a burning sense of shame—a smothered fury of resentment—in the child's breast, and, as she took the basket, she felt as if she would have liked to do some mischief to Miss Asphyxia. "I hate you, I hate you, I hate you," she said to herself when she got into the cellar, and fairly out of hearing. "I hate you, and when I get to be a woman, I'll pay you for all this."

Miss Asphyxia, however, went on her way, in the testimony of a good conscience. She felt that she had been equal to the emergency, and had met a crisis in the most thorough and effectual manner.

The teachers of district schools in those days often displayed a singular ingenuity in the invention of punishments by which the different vices of childhood should be repressed; and Miss Asphyxia's housewifely confidence in soap and sand as a means of purification had suggested to her this expedient in her school-teaching days. "You can break any child o' lying, right off short," she was wont to say. "Jest scour their

mouths out with soap and sand. They never want to try it more'n once or twice, I tell you."

The intervals which the child had for play were, in Miss Asphyxia's calendar, few and far between. Sometimes, when she had some domestic responsibility on her mind which made the watching of the child a burden to her, she would say to her, "You may go and play till I call you," or, "You may play for half an hour; but you mustn't go out of the yard."

Then the child, alone, companionless, without playthings, sought to appropriate to herself some little treasures and possessions for the instituting of that fairy world of imagination which belongs to childhood. She sighed for a doll that had once belonged to her in the days when she had a mother, but which Miss Asphyxia had contemptuously tossed aside in making up her bundle.

Left thus to her own resources, the child yet showed the unquenchable love of beauty, and the power of creating and gilding an imaginary little world, which is the birthright of childhood. She had her small store of what she had been wont to call pretty things,—a broken teapot handle, a fragment of coloured glass, part of a goblet that had once belonged to Miss Asphyxia's treasures, one or two smooth pebbles, and some red berries from a wild rose-bush. These were the darlings, the dear delights of her heart,—hoarded in secret places, gazed on by stealth, taken out and arranged and re-arranged, during the brief half-hours, or hours, when Miss Asphyxia allowed her to play. To these treasures the kindly Sol added another; for one day, when Miss Asphyxia was not looking, he drew from his vest-pocket a couple of milk-weed pods, and said, "Them's putty,—mebbe ye'd like 'em; hide 'em up, though, or she'll sweep 'em into the fire."

No gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls ever made bright

eyes open wider than did the exploring the contents of these pods. It was silk and silver, fairy-spun glass,—something so bright and soft that it really seemed dear to her; and she took the shining silk fringes out and caressed them against her cheek, and wrapped them in a little bit of paper, and put them in her bosom. They felt so soft and downy,—they were so shining and bright,—and they were her own,—Sol had given them to her. She meditated upon them as possessions of mysterious beauty and unknown value. Unfortunately, one day Miss Asphyxia discovered her gazing upon this treasure by stealth during her working hours.

“What have you got there?” she said. “Bring it to me.”

The child reluctantly placed her treasure in the great bony claw.

“Why, that’s milkweed silk,” said Miss Asphyxia. “Tain’t good for nothin’. What you doing with that?”

“I like it because it’s pretty.”

“Fiddlestick!” said Miss Asphyxia, giving it a contemptuous toss. “I can’t have you making litter with such stuff round the house. Throw it in the fire.”

To do Miss Asphyxia justice, she would never have issued this order if she had had the remotest conception how dear this apparent trash was to the hopeless little heart.

The child hesitated, and held her treasure firmly. Her breast heaved, and there was a desperate glare in her soft hazel eyes.

“Throw it in the fire,” said Miss Asphyxia, stamping her foot, as she thought she saw risings of insubordination.

The child threw it in, and saw her dear, beautiful treasure slowly consumed, with a swelling and indignant heart. She was now sure that Miss Asphyxia hated her, and only sought occasion to torment her.

Miss Asphyxia did not hate the child, nor did she love her. She regarded her exactly as she did her broom and her rolling-pin and her spinning-wheel,—as an implement or instrument which she was to fashion to her uses. She had a general idea, too, of certain duties to her as a human being, which she expressed by the phrase, “doing right by her,”—that is, to feed and clothe and teach her. In fact, Miss Asphyxia believed fully in the golden rule of doing as she would be done by; but if a lioness should do to a young lamb exactly as she would be done by, it might be all the worse for the lamb.

The little mind and heart were awakened to a perfect burning conflict of fear, shame, anger, and a desire for revenge, which now overflowed with strange, bitter waters that hitherto ignorantly happy valley of child-life. She had never had any sense of moral or religious obligation, any more than a butterfly or a canary-bird. She had, it is true, said her little prayers every night; but, as she said to herself, she had always said them to mother or Harry, and now there was nobody to say them to. Every night she thought of this when she lay down in her joyless, lonesome bed; but the kindly fatigue which hard work brings soon weighed down her eyes, and she slept soundly all night, and found herself hungry at breakfast-time the next morning.

On Sunday Miss Asphyxia rested from her labours,—a strange rest for a soul that had nothing to do in the spiritual world. Miss Asphyxia was past middle life, and, as she said, had never experienced religion,—a point which she regarded with some bitterness, since, as she was wont to say, she had always been as honest in her dealings and kept Sunday as strict as most church-members. Still, she would do her best at giving religious instruction to the child; and accordingly, the first Sunday she was dressed in her best frock,

and set up in a chair to be kept still while the waggon was getting ready to "go to meetin'," and Miss Asphyxia tried to put into her head the catechism made by that dear, friendly old lover of children, Dr. Watts.

But somehow the first question, benignly as it is worded, had a grim and threatening sound as it came from the jaws of Miss Asphyxia, somewhat thus: "Stop playing with your frock, and look right at me, now. 'Can you tell me, dear child, who made you?'"

Now the little one had often heard this point explained, but she felt small disposition to give up her knowledge at this demand; so she only looked at Miss Asphyxia in sulky silence.

"Say, now, after me," said Miss Asphyxia, "'The great God that made heaven and earth.'"

The child repeated the words, in that mumbling, sulky manner which children use when they are saying what does not please them.

"Tina Percival," said Miss Asphyxia, in warlike tones, "do you speak out plain, or I'll box your ears."

Thus warned, the child uttered her confession of faith audibly enough.

Miss Asphyxia was peculiarly harsh and emphatic on the answer which described the omnipresence of the Supreme Being, and her harsh voice, croaking, "If I tell a lie, He sees me,—if I speak an idle or wicked word, He hears me," seemed to the child to have a ghastly triumph in it to confirm the idea that Miss Asphyxia's awful tyranny was thoroughly backed up by that of a Being far more mighty, and from whom there was no possible escape. Miss Asphyxia enforced this truth with a coarse and homely eloquence, that there was no getting away from God,—that He could see in the night just as plain as in the daytime,—see her in the yard, see her in

the barn, see her under the bed, see her down cellar; and that whenever she did anything wrong He would write it down in a dreadful book, and on the Day of Judgment she would have it all brought out upon her,—all which the child heard with a stony, sullen despair. Miss Asphyxia illustrated what became of naughty children by such legends as the story of the two she-bears which came out of a wood and tare forty-and-two children who mocked at old Elisha, till the rebellious auditor quaked in her little shoes, and wondered if the bears would get Harry, and if Harry, after all, would not find some way to get round the bears and come to her help.

At meeting she at last saw Harry, seated, however, in a distant part of the house; but her heart was ready to jump out of her breast to go to him; and when the services were over she contrived to elude Miss Asphyxia, and, passing through the throng, seized his hand just as he was going out, and whispered, "O Harry, Harry, I do want to see you so much! Why don't you come to see me?"

"They wouldn't let me, Tina," said Harry, drawing his sister into a little recess made between the church and the horse-block,—an old-fashioned structure that used to exist for the accommodation of those who came to church on horse-back. "They won't let me come. I wanted to come,—I wanted to see you so much!"

"O Harry, I don't like her,—she is cross to me. Do take me away,—do, Harry! Let's run away together."

"Where could we go, Tina?"

"Oh, somewhere,—no matter where. I hate her. I won't stay with her. Say, Harry, I sleep in a little room by the kitchen; come to my window some night and take me away."

"Well, perhaps I will."

"Here you are, you little minx!" said Miss Asphyxia.



“What you up to now? Come, the waggin’s waiting,”—and, with a look of severe suspicion directed to Harry, she seized the child and conveyed her to the waggon, and was soon driving off with all speed homeward.

That evening the boy pondered long and soberly. He had worked well and steadily during the week, and felt no disposition to complain of his lot on that account, being, as we have said, of a faithful and patient nature, and accepting what the friendly hired men told him,—that work was good for little boys, that it would make him grow strong, and that by and by he would be grown up and able to choose his own work and master. But this separation from his little sister, and her evident unhappiness, distressed him; he felt that she belonged to him, and that he must care for her, and so, when he came home, he again followed Goody Smith to the retirement of her milk-room.

The poor woman had found a perfect summer of delight in her old age in having around her the gentle-mannered, sweet-spoken, good boy, who had thus marvellously fallen to her lot; and boundless was the loving-kindness with which she treated him. Sweet cakes were slipped into his hands at all odd intervals, choice morsels set away for his consumption in secret places of the buttery, and many an adroit lie told to Old Crab to secure for him extra indulgences, or prevent the imposition of extra tasks; and many a little lie did she recommend to him, at which the boy’s honest nature and Christian education inclined him greatly to wonder.

That a grown-up, good old woman should tell lies, and advise little boys to tell them, was one of those facts of human experience which he turned over in his mind with wonder,—thinking it over with that quiet questioning which children practise who have nobody of whom they dare make many inquiries. But to-day he was determined to have some-



thing done about Tina, and so he began, "Please, won't you ask him to let me go and see Tina to-night? It's Sunday, and there isn't any work to do."

"Lord a massy, child, he's crabbeder Sundays than any other day, he has so much time to graowl round. He drinks more cider; and Sunday night it's always as much as a body's life's worth to go near him. I don't want you to get him sot agin ye. He got sot agin Obed; and no critter knows why, except mebber'cause he was some comfort to me. And ye oughter seen how he used that 'ere boy. Why, I've stood here in the milk-room and heerd that 'ere boy's screeches clear from the stun pastur'. Finally the men, they said they couldn't stan' it, nor they wouldn't."

"Who was Obed?" said Harry, fearfully.

"Lordy massy! wal, I forgot ye didn't know Obed. He was the baby, ye see. He was born the eighteenth of April, jest about nine o'clock in the evening, and Aunt Jerusha Periwinkle and Granny Watkins, they said they hadn't seen no sich child in all their nussing. Held up his head jest as lively, and sucked his thumb, he did,—jest the patientest, best baby ye ever did see,—and growed beautiful. And he was gettin' to be a real beautiful young man when he went off."

"Went off?" said Harry.

"Yes, he went off to sea, jest for nothin' but 'cause his father aggravated him so."

"What *was* the matter? what *did* he do it for?"

"Wal, Obed, he was allers round helpin' me,—he'd turn the cheeses for me, and draw the water, and was always on hand when I wanted a turn. And he took up agin him, and said we was both lazy, and that I kept him round waitin' on me; and he was allers a throwin' it up at me that I thought more of Obed than I did of him; and one day flesh and blood

couldn't stan' it no longer. I got clear beat out, and says I, 'Well, father, why shouldn't I? Obed's allers a tryin' to help me and make my work easy to me, and thinkin' what he can do for me; and he's the greatest comfort of my life, and it ain't no sin if I do think more on him than I do of other folks.' Wal, that very day he went and picked a quarrel with him, and told him he was going to give him a stand-up thrashing. And Obed, says he, 'No, father, that you shan't. I'm sixteen year old, and I've made up my mind you shan't thrash me no more.' And with that he says to him, 'Get along out of my house, you lazy dog,' says he; 'you've been eatin' of my bread too long,' says he. 'Well, father, I will,' says Obed. And he walks up to me and kisses me, and says he, 'Never mind, mother, I'm going to come home one of these days and bring money enough to take care of you in your old age; and you shall have a house of your own, and shan't have to work; and you shall sit in your satin gown and drink your tea with white sugar every day, and you shan't be no man's slave. You see if I don't. With that he turned and was off, and I hain't never seen him since."

"How long's he been gone?"

"Wal, it's four years come next April. I've hed one or two letters from him, and he's ris' to be mate. And he sent me his wages,—biggest part on 'em,—but he hed to git 'em to me round by sendin' on 'em to Ebal Parker; else *he'd* a took 'em, ye see. I couldn't have nothin' decent to wear to meetin', nor my little caddy o' green tea, if it hadn't been for Obed. He won't read Obed's letters, nor hear a word about him, and keeps a castin' it up at me that I think so much of Obed that I don't love him none."

"I shouldn't think you would," said the boy, innocently.

"Wal, folks seems to think that you must love 'em through thick and thin, and I try ter. I've allers kep' his clothes

mended, and his stockings darned up, and two or three good pair ahead, and done for him jest the best I know how; but as to lovin' folks when they's so kind o' as he is, I don't reelly know how ter. Expect, ef he was to be killed, I should feel putty bad, too—kind o' used to havin' on him round."

This conversation was interrupted by the voice of Crab, in the following pleasing style of remark, "What the devil be you a-doin' with that boy,—keepin' him from his work there? It's time to be to the barn seein' to the critters. Here, you young scamp, go out and cut some feed for the old mare. Suppose I keep you round jest to eat up the victuals and be round under folks' feet?"

## CHAPTER XI.

### The Crisis.

MATTERS between Miss Asphyxia and her little subject began to show evident signs of approaching some crisis, for which that valiant virgin was preparing herself with mind resolved. It was one of her educational tactics that children, at greater or less intervals, would require what she was wont to speak of as *good* whippings, as a sort of constitutional stimulus to start them in the ways of well-doing. As a school-teacher, she was often fond of rehearsing her experiences,—how she had her eye on Jim or Bob through weeks of growing carelessness or obstinacy or rebellion, suffering the measure of iniquity gradually to become full, until in an awful hour, she pounced down on the culprit in the very blossom of his sin, and gave him such a lesson as he would remember, as she would assure him, the longest day he had to live.

The burning of rebellious thoughts in the little breast, of internal hatred and opposition, could not long go on without slight whiffs of external smoke, such as mark the course of

subterranean fire. As the child grew more accustomed to Miss Asphyxia, while her hatred of her increased, somewhat of that native hardihood which had characterised her happier days returned; and she began to use all the subtlety and secretiveness which belonged to her feminine nature in contriving how *not* to do the will of her tyrant, and yet not to seem designedly to oppose. It really gave the child a new impulse in living to devise little plans for annoying Miss Asphyxia without being herself detected. In all her daily toils she made nice calculations how slow she could possibly be, how blundering and awkward, without really bringing on herself a punishment; and when an acute and capable child turns all its faculties in such a direction, the results may be very considerable.

Miss Asphyxia found many things going wrong in her establishment in most unaccountable ways. One morning her sensibilities were almost paralysed, on opening her milk-room door, to find there, with creamy whiskers, the venerable Tom, her own model cat,—a beast who had grown up in the very sanctities of household decorum, and whom she was sure she had herself shut out of the house, with her usual punctuality, at nine o'clock the evening before. She could not dream that he had been enticed through Tina's window, caressed on her bed, and finally sped stealthily on his mission of revenge, while the child returned to her pillow to gloat over her success.

Miss Asphyxia also, in more than one instance, in her rapid gyrations, knocked down and destroyed a valuable bit of pottery or earthenware, that somehow had contrived to be stationed exactly in the wind of her elbow or her hand. It was the more vexatious because she broke them herself. And the child assumed stupid innocence: "How could she know Miss Sphyxy was coming that way?" or, "She didn't see

her." True, she caught many a hasty cuff and sharp rebuke; but, with true Indian spirit, she did not mind singeing her own fingers if she only tortured her enemy.

It would be an endless task to describe the many vexations that can be made to arise in the course of household experience when there is a shrewd little elf watching with sharpened faculties for every opportunity to inflict an annoyance or do a mischief. In childhood the passions move with a simplicity of action unknown to any other period of life, and a child's hatred and a child's revenge have an intensity of bitterness entirely unalloyed by moral considerations; and when a child is without an object of affection, and feels itself unloved, its whole vigour of being goes into the channels of hate.

Religious instruction, as imparted by Miss Asphyxia, had small influence in restraining the immediate force of passion. That "the law worketh wrath" is a maxim as old as the times of the apostles. The image of a dreadful Judge—a great God, with ever-watchful eyes, that Miss Asphyxia told her about—roused that combative element in the child's heart which says in the heart of the fool, "There is no God." "After all," thought the little sceptic, "how does she know? She never saw Him." Perhaps, after all, then, it might be only a fabrication of her tyrant to frighten her into submission. There was a dear Father that mamma used to tell her about; and perhaps He was the one, after all. As for the bear story she had a private conversation with Sol, and was relieved by this confident assurance that there "hadn't been no bears seen round in them parts these ten year;" so that she was safe in that regard, even if she should call Miss Asphyxia a bald-head, which she perfectly longed to do, just to see what would come of it.

In like manner, though the story of Ananias and Sapphira,

struck down dead for lying, had been told her in forcible and threatening tones, yet still the little sinner thought within herself that such things must have ceased in our times, as she had told more than one clever lie which neither Miss Asphyxia nor any one else had found out.

In fact, the child considered herself and Miss Asphyxia as in a state of warfare which suspends all moral rules. In the stories of little girls who were taken captives by goblins or giants or witches, she remembered many accounts of sagacious deceptions which they had practised on their captors. Her very blood tingled when she thought of the success of some of them,—how Hensel and Grettel had heated an oven red-hot, and persuaded the old witch to get into it by some cock-and-bull story of what she would find there; and how, the minute she got in, they shut up the oven door, and burnt her all up! Miss Asphyxia thought the child a vexatious, careless, troublesome little baggage, it is true; but if she could have looked into her heart and seen her imaginings, she would probably have thought her a little fiend.

At last, one day, the smothered fire broke out. The child had had a half-hour of holiday, and had made herself happy in it by furbishing up her little bedroom. She had picked a peony, a yellow lily, and one or two blue irises, from the spot of flowers in the garden, and put them in a tin dipper on the table in her room, and ranged around them her broken bits of china, her red berries and fragments of glass, in various zigzags. The spirit of adornment thus roused within her, she remembered having seen her brother make pretty garlands of oak-leaves; and, running out to an oak hard by, she stripped off an apronful of the leaves, and, sitting down in the kitchen door, began her attempts to plait them into garlands. She grew good-natured and happy as she wrought, and was beginning to find herself in charity even with Miss



Asphyxia, when down came that individual, broom in hand, looking vengeful as those old Greek furies who used to haunt houses, testifying their wrath by violent sweeping.

"What under the canopy you up to now, making such a litter on my kitchen floor?" she said. "Can't I leave you a minute 'thout your gettin' into some mischief, I want to know? Pick 'em up, every leaf of 'em, and carry 'em and throw 'em over the fence; and don't you never let me find you bringing no such rubbish into my kitchen again!"

In this unlucky moment she turned, and, looking into the little bedroom, whose door stood open, saw the arrangements there. "What!" she said; "you been getting down the tin cup to put your messes into? 'Take 'em all out!" she said, seizing the flowers with a grasp that crumpled them, and throwing them into the child's apron. "Take 'em away, every one of 'em! You'd get everything out of place, from one end of the house to the other, if I didn't watch you!" And forthwith she swept off the child's treasures into her dust-pan.

In a moment all the smothered wrath of weeks blazed up in the little soul. She looked as if a fire had been kindled in her which reddened her cheeks and burned in her eyes; and rushing blindly at Miss Asphyxia, she cried, "You are a wicked woman, a hateful old witch, and I hate you!"

"Hity-tity! I thought I should have to give you a lesson before long, and so I shall," said Miss Asphyxia, seizing her with stern determination. "You've needed a good sound whipping for a long time, miss, and you are going to get it now. I'll whip you so that you'll remember it, I'll promise you."

And Miss Asphyxia kept her word, though the child, in the fury of despair, fought her with tooth and nail, and proved herself quite a dangerous little animal; but at length strength



got the better in the fray, and, sobbing, though unsubdued, the little culprit was put to bed without her supper.

In those days the literal use of the rod in the education of children was considered as a direct Bible teaching. The wisest, the most loving parent felt bound to it in many cases, even though every stroke cut into his own heart. The laws of New England allowed masters to correct their apprentices, and teachers their pupils,—and even the public whipping-post was an institution of New England towns. It is not to be supposed, therefore, that Miss Asphyxia regarded herself otherwise than as thoroughly performing a most necessary duty. She was as ignorant of the blind agony of mingled shame, wrath, sense of degradation, and burning for revenge, which had been excited by her measures, as the icy east wind of Boston flats is of the stinging and shivering it causes in its course. Is it the wind's fault if your nose is frozen? There is not much danger in these days that such measures will be the fashionable ones in the bringing up of children. But there is a class of coldly conscientious, severe persons, who still, as a matter of duty and conscience, justify measures like these in education. *They*, at all events, are the ones who ought to be forbidden to use them, and whose use of them with children too often proves a soul-murder,—a dispensation of wrath and death. Such a person is commonly both obtuse in sensibility and unimaginative in temperament; but if his imagination could once be thoroughly enlightened to see the fiend-like passions, the terrific convulsions, which are roused in a child's soul by the irritation and degradation of such correction, he would shrink back appalled. With sensitive children left in the hands of stolid and unsympathising force, such convulsions and mental agonies often are the beginning of a sort of slow moral insanity which gradually destroys all that is good in the soul. Such was the danger now hanging

over the hapless little one whom a dying mother had left to God. Is there no stirring among the angel wings on her behalf?

As the child lay sobbing in a little convulsed heap in her bed, a hard, horny hand put back the curtain of the window, and the child felt something thrown on the bed. It was Sol, who, on coming in to his supper, had heard from Miss Asphyxia the whole story, and who, as a matter of course, sympathised entirely with the child. He had contrived to slip a doughnut into his pocket, when his hostess was looking the other way. When the child rose up in the bed and showed her swelled and tear-stained face, Sol whispered, "There's a doughnut I saved for ye. Darn her pictur'! Don't dare say a word, ye know. She'll hear me."

"O Sol, can't you get Harry to come here and see me?" said the child, in an earnest whisper.

"Yes, I'll get him, if I have to go to thunder for't," said Sol. "You jest lie down now, there's a good girl, and I'll work it,—ye see if I don't. 'T'o-morrow I'll make her go off to the store, and I'll get him down here, you see if I don't. It's a tarnal shame; that 'ere critter ain't got no more bowels than a file."

The child, however, was comforted, and actually went to sleep hugging the doughnut. She felt as if she loved Sol, and said so to the doughnut many times,—although he had great horny fists, and eyes like oxen. With these, he had a heart in his bosom, and the child loved him.

## CHAPTER XII.

## The Lion's Mouth Shut.

"Now, where a plague is that boy?" said Old Crab, suddenly bearing down, as evil-disposed people are always apt to do, in a most unforeseen moment.

The fact was that there had been a silent conspiracy among Sol and Goody Smith and the hired men of Old Crab, to bring about a meeting between the children. Miss Asphyxia had been got to the country store and kept busy with various bargains which Sol had suggested, and Old Crab had been induced to go to mill, and then the boy had been sent by Goody Smith on an errand to Miss Asphyxia's house. Of course he was not to find her at home, and was to stay and see his sister, and be sure and be back again by four o'clock.

"Where a plague is that lazy shote of a boy?" he repeated.

"What, Harry?"

"Yes, Harry. Who do you suppose I mean? Harry,—where is he?"

"Oh, I sent him up to Sphyxy's."

"*You* sent him?" said Old Crab, with that kind of tone which sounds so much like a blow that one dodges one's head involuntarily. "*You* sent him? What business *you* got interfering in the work?"

"Lord a massy, father, I jest wanted Sphyxy's cards and some o' that 'ere fillin' she promised to give me. He won't be gone long."

Old Crab stood at this disadvantage in his fits of ill-temper with his wife, that there was no form of evil language or abuse that he had not tried so many times on her that it was quite a matter of course for her to hear it. He had used

up the English language,—made it, in fact, absolutely of no effect,—while his fund of ill-temper was, after all, but half expressed.

“You’ve begun with that ’ere boy jest as you allers did with all your own, gettin’ ’em to be a-waitin’ round on you,—jest ’cause you’re a lazy good-for-nothin’. We’re so rich, I wonder you don’t hire a waiter for nothin’ but to stan’ behind your chair. I’ll teach him who his master is when he comes back.”

“Now, father, ’t ain’t no fault o’ his’n. *I sent him.*”

“And *I* sot him to work in the fields, and I’d like to know if he’s goin’ to leave what I set him to do, and go round after your errands. Here ’tis gettin’ to be ’most five o’clock, and the critters want fodderin’, and that ’ere boy a-dancing ’tendance on you. But he ain’t a-doin’ that. He’s jest off a berryin’ or suthin’ with that trollopin’ sister o’ his’n,—jes’ what you bring on us, takin’ in trampers. That ’ere gal, she pesters Sphyxy half to death.”

“Sphyxy’s pretty capable of takin’ care of herself,” said Goody Smith, still keeping busy with her knitting, but looking uneasily up the road where the form of the boy might be expected to appear.

The outbreak that she had long feared of her husband’s evil nature was at hand. She knew it by as many signs as one foretells the approach of hurricanes or rain-storms. She knew it by the evil gleam in his small, grey eyes,—by the impatient pacing backward and forward in the verandah, like a caged wild animal. It made little matter to him what the occasion was: he had such a superfluity of evil temper to vent, that one thing for his purpose was about as good as another.

It grew later and later, and Old Crab went to the barn to

attend to his cattle, and the poor little old woman knitted uneasily.

"What could 'a' kep' him?" she thought. "He can't 'a' run off." There was a sudden gleam of mingled pleasure and pain in the old woman's heart as this idea darted through her mind. "I shouldn't wonder if he would, but I kind o' hate to part with him."

At last she sees him coming along the road, and runs to meet him. "How could you be so late? He's drefful mad with ye."

"I didn't know how late it was. Besides, all I could do, Tina would follow me, and I had to turn back and carry her home. Tina has bad times there. That woman isn't kind to her."

"No, dear, she ain't noways kind," said the old woman; "it ain't Sphxy's way to be kind; but she'll do meddlin' well by her,—anyway, she won't let nobody hurt her but herself. It's a hard world to live in; we have to take it as't comes."

"Well, anyway," said the boy, "they *must* let us go to see each other. It isn't right to keep us apart."

"No, 'tain't, dear; but lordy massy, what can ye do?"

There was a great steady tear in the boy's large blue eyes as he stopped at the porch, and he gave a sort of dreary shiver.

"Halleoah you there! you lazy little cuss," said Old Crab, coming from the barn, "where you been idling all the afternoon?"

"I've been seeing my sister," said the boy, steadily.

"Thought so. Where's them cards and the fillin' you was sent for?"

"There wasn't anybody at home to get them."

“And why didn't you come right back, you little varmint?”

“Because I wanted to see Tina. She's my sister; and my mother told me to take care of her; and it's wicked to keep us apart so.”

“Don't you give me none of yer saace,” said Old Crab, seizing the boy by one ear, to which he gave a vicious wrench.

“Let me alone,” said the boy, flushing up with the sudden irritation of pain and the bitter sense of injustice.

“Let you alone? I guess I won't; talking saace to me that 'ere way. Guess I'll show you who's master. It's time you was walked off down to the barn, sir, and find out who's your master,” he said, as he seized the boy by the collar and drew him off.

“O Lord!” said the woman, running out and stretching her hands instinctively after them. “Father, do let the boy alone.”

She could not help this cry any more than a bird can help a shriek when she sees the hawk pouncing down on her nest, though she knew perfectly well that she might as well have shouted a petition in the angry face of the north-east wind.

“Take off your jacket,” said Old Crab, as soon as he had helped himself to a long cart-whip which stood there.

The boy belonged to that class of amiable, good-natured children who are not easily irritated or often provoked, but who, when moved by a great injustice or cruelty, are thrown into convulsions of passion. The smallest and most insignificant animal, in moments of utter despair, when every fibre of its being is made vital with the energy of desperate resistance, often has a force which will make the strongest and boldest stand at bay. The boy retreated a pace or two,

braced his back against the manger, while his whole form trembled and appeared to dilate, and it seemed as if blue streams of light glared from his eyes like sparks struck from burning steel.

"Strike me if you dare, you wicked, dreadful man," he shouted. "Don't you know that God sees you? God is my Father, and my mother is gone to God; and if you hurt me He'll punish you. You know I haven't done anything wrong, and God knows it. Now strike me if you dare."

The sight of any human being in a singular and abnormal state has something appalling about it; and at this moment the child really appeared to Old Crab like something supernatural. He stood a moment looking at him, and then his eyes suddenly seemed fixed on something above and beyond him, for he gazed with a strange, frightened expression; and at last, pushing with his hands, called out, "Go along; get away, get away! I hain't touched him," and, turning, fled out of the barn.

He did not go to the house again, but to the village tavern, and, entering the bar-room with a sort of distraught air, called for a dram, and passed the evening in a cowering state of quiet in the corner, which was remarked on by many as singular.

The boy came back into the house.

"Massy to us, child," said the old woman, "I thought he'd half killed ye."

"No, he hasn't touched me. God wouldn't let him," said the boy.

"Well, I declare for't! He must have sent the angels that shut the lion's mouth when Daniel was in the den," said the woman. "I wouldn't 'a' had him struck ye, not for ten dollars."

The moon was now rising, large, white, and silvery, yet



with a sort of tremulous, rosy flush, as it came up in the girdle of a burning autumn horizon. The boy stood a moment looking at it. His eyes were still dilated with that unnatural light, and his little breast heaving with waves of passion not yet tranquillised.

"Which way did he go?" said the woman.

"Up the road," said the boy.

"To the tavern," said the woman. "He's been there before this afternoon. At any rate, then, he'll let us alone a while. There comes the men home to supper. Come in; I've got a turnover I made a purpose for ye."

"No, I must bid you good-bye now," said the boy. "I can't stay here any longer."

"Why, where be ye going?"

"Going to look for a better place, where I can take care of Tina," said the boy.

"Ye ain't a-going to leave me?" said the old woman. "Yet I can't want ye to stay. I can't have nothin' nor nobody."

"I'll come back one of these days," said the boy cheerfully,—*"come and see you."*

"Stay and get your supper, anyhow," pleaded the old woman. "I hate ter have ye go, drefful bad."

"I don't want any supper," said the child; "but if you'll give me a little basket of things, I want 'em for Tina."

The old soul ran to her buttery, and crammed a small splint basket with turnovers, doughnuts, and ample slices of rye bread and butter, and the boy took it and trudged off, just as the hired men were coming home.

"Hulloah, bub!" shouted they, "where ye goin'?"

"Going to seek my fortune," said the boy, cheerfully.

"Jest the way they all go," said the old woman.

"Where do you suppose the young un'll fetch up?" said one of the men to the other.

"No business of mine,—can't fetch up wus than he has ben a doin'."

"Old Crab a-cuttin' up one of his shines, I s'pose?" said the other, interrogatively.

"Shouldn't wonder; 'bout time; ben to the tavern this arternoon, I reckon."

The boy walked along the rough stony road towards Miss Asphyxia's farm. It was a warm, mellow evening in October. The air had only a pleasant coolness. Everything was tender and bright. A clump of hickory trees on a rocky eminence before him stood like pillars of glowing gold in the twilight; one by one, little stars looked out, winking and twinkling at the lonely child, as it seemed to him, with a friendly, encouraging ray, like his mother's eyes.

That afternoon he had spent trying to comfort his little sister, and put into her soul some of the childlike yet sedate patience with which he embraced his own lot, and the good hopes which he felt of being able sometime to provide for her when he grew bigger. But he found nothing but feverish impatience, which all his eloquence could scarcely keep within bounds. He had, however, arranged with her that he should come evenings after she had gone to bed, and talk to her at the window of her bedroom, that she should not be so lonesome nights. The perfectly demoniac violence which Old Crab had shown this night had determined him not to stay with him any longer. He would take his sister, and they would wander off, a long, long way, till they came to better people, and then he would try again to get work, and ask some good woman to be kind to Tina. Such, in substance, was the plan that occurred to the child; and ac-

cordingly that night, after little Tina had laid her head on her lonely pillow, she heard a whispered call at her window.

The large, bright eyes opened very wide, as she sat up in bed and looked towards the window, where Harry's face appeared.

"It's me, Tina,—I've come back,—be very still. I'm going to stay in the barn till everybody's asleep, and then I'll come and wake you, and you get out of the window and come with me."

"To be sure I will, Harry. Let me come now, and sleep with you in the barn."

"No, Tina, that wouldn't do; lie still. They'd see us. Wait till everybody's asleep. You just lie down and go to sleep. I'll get in at your window and waken you when it's time."

At this moment the door of the child's room was opened; the boy's face was gone in an instant from the window. The child's heart was beating like a trip-hammer; there was a tingling in her ears; but she kept her little eyes tightly shut.

"Oh, here's that brown towel I gin her to hem," said Miss Asphyxia, peacefully. "She's done her stent this arternoon. That 'ere whipping did some good."

"You'll never whip me again," thought the defiant little heart under the bedclothes.

Old Crab came home that night thoroughly drunk,—a thing that did not very often occur in his experience. He commonly took only just enough to keep himself in a hyena's state of temper, but not enough to dull the edge of his cautious grasping, money-saving faculties. But to-night he had had an experience that had frightened him, and driven him to deeper excess as a refuge from thought.

When the boy, upon whom he was meaning to wreak his

diabolic passions, so suddenly turned upon him in the electric fury of enkindled passion, there was a sort of jar or vibration of the nervous element in the man's nature, that brought about a result not uncommon to men of his habits. As he was looking in a sort of stunned, stupid wonder at the boy, where he stood braced against the manger, he afterwards declared that he saw suddenly in the dark space above it, hovering in the air, the exact figure and form of the dead woman whom they had buried in the graveyard only a few weeks before. "Her eyes was looking right at me, like live coals," he said; "and she had up her hand as if she'd 'a' struck me; and I grew all over cold as a stone."

"What do you suppose 'twas?" said his auditor.

"How should I know," said Old Crab. "But there I was; and that very night the young 'un ran off. I wouldn't have tried to get him back, not for my right hand, I tell you. Tell you what," he added, rolling a quid of tobacco reflectively in his mouth, "*I don't like dead folks. Ef dead folks 'll let me alone, I'll let them alone. That 'ere's fair, ain't it?*"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### The Empty Bird's-nest.

THE next morning showed as brilliant a getting up of gold and purple as ever belonged to the toilet of a morning. There was to be seen from Miss Asphyxia's bedroom window a brave sight, if there had been any eyes to enjoy it,—a range of rocky cliffs with little pin-feathers of black pine upon them, and behind them the sky all aflame with bars of massy light, —orange and crimson and burning gold,—and long, bright rays, darting hither and thither, touched now the window of a farmhouse, which seemed to kindle and flash back a morning salutation; now they hit a tall, scarlet maple, and now

they pierced between clumps of pine, making their black edges flame with gold; and over all, in the brightening sky, stood the morning star, like a great tremulous tear of light, just ready to fall on a darkened world.

Not a bit of all this saw Miss Asphyxia, though she had looked straight out at it. Her eyes and the eyes of the cow, who, with her horned front, was serenely gazing out of the barn window on the same prospect, were equally unreceptive.

She looked at all this solemn pomp of gold and purple, and the mysterious star, and only said, "Good day for killin' the hog, and I must be up gettin' on the brass kettle. I should like to know why Sol ain't been a stirrin' an hour ago. I'd really like to know how long folks *would* sleep ef I'd let 'em."

Here an indistinct vision came into Miss Asphyxia's mind of what the world would be without her to keep it in order. She called aloud to her prime minister, who slept in the loft above, "Sol! Sol! You awake?"

"Guess I be," said Sol; and a thundering sound of cowhide boots on the stairs announced that Sol's matutinal toilet was complete.

"We're late this morning," said Miss Asphyxia, in a tone of virtuous indignation.

"Never knowed the time when we wa'n't late," said Sol, composedly.

"You thump on that 'ere child's door, and tell her to be lively," said Miss Asphyxia.

"Yaas'm, I will," said Sol, while secretly he was indulging in a long and low chuckle, for Sol had been party to the fact that the nest of that young bird had been for many hours forsaken. He had instructed the boy what road to take, and bade him "walk spry and he would be out of the parish of Needmore afore daybreak. Walk on, then, and follow the

road along the river," said Sol, "and it'll bring you to Oldtown, where our folks be. You can't miss your victuals and drink any day in Oldtown, call at what house you may; and ef you's to get into Deacon Badger's, why, your fortin's made. The deacon he's a soft-spoken man to everybody,—white folks, niggers, and Indians,—and Ma'am Badger keeps regular poor-man's tavern, and won't turn even a dog away that behaves himself. Ye couldn't light on wus than ye have lit on,—for Old Crab's possessed of a devil, everybody knows; and as for Miss Asphyxia, she's one of the kind of sperits that goes walkin' through dry places seekin' rest and findin' none. Lordy massy, an old gal like her ain't nobody to bring up a child. It takes a woman that's got juice in her to do that. Why, that 'ere crittur's drier'n a two-year-old mullen-stalk. There ain't no sap ris in her these 'ere thirty years. She means well; but, lordy, you might jest as well give young turkey chicks to the old gobbler, and let him stram off in the mowin' grass with 'em, as give a delicate little gal like your sister to her to raise; so you jest go long and keep up your courage, like a brave boy as ye be, and you'll come to somethin' by daylight;"—and Sol added to these remarks a minced pie, with a rye crust of a peculiarly solid texture, adapted to resist any of the incidents of time and travel, which 'pie had been set out as part of his own last night's supper.

When, therefore, he was exhorted to rap on the little girl's door, he gave sundry noisy, gleeful thumps,—pounding with both fists, and alternating with a rythmical kick of the cowhide boots, calling out in stentorian tones, "Come, little un,—time you's up. Miss Sphyxy's comin' down on ye. Better be lively! Bless me, how the gal sleeps!"

"Don't take the door off the hinges," said Miss Asphyxia, sweeping down-stairs. "Let me come; I'll wake her, I

guess!" and with a dipper of cold water in her hand, Miss Asphyxia burst into the little room. "What!—what!—where!" she said, looking under the bed, and over and around, with a dazed expression. "What's this mean? Do tell if the child's re'lly for once got up of herself afore I called her. Sol, see if she's out pickin' up chips!"

Sol opened the door and gazed out with well-affected stolidity at the wood-pile, which, garnished with a goodly show of large chips, was now being touched up and brightened by the first rays of the morning sun.

"Ain't here," he said.

"Ain't here? Why, where can she be then? There ain't nobody swallowed her, I s'pose; and if anybody's run off with her in the night, I guess they'd bring her back by daylight."

"She must 'a' run off," said Sol.

"Run! Where could she 'a' run to?"

"Mebbe she's gone to her brother's."

"I bet you," said Miss Asphyxia, "it's that 'ere boy that's the bottom of it all. You may always know that there's a boy at the bottom, when there's any deviltry up. He was here yesterday,—now wan't he?"

"Wal, I reckon he was," said Sol. "But, massy, Miss Sphyxy, ef the pig is to be killed to-day, we can't stan' a talkin' about what you nor me can't help. Ef the child's gone, why she's somewhere in the Lord's world, and it's likely she'll keep,—she won't melt away like the manna in the wilderness; and when the pig is killed, and the pork salted down and got out o' the way, it'll be time enough to think o' lookin' on her up. She wan't no gret actual use,—and with kettles o' hot water round, it's jest as well not to have a child under yer feet. Ef she got scalded, why, there's your time a taking care on her, and mebbe a doctor to pay; so it's jest as well that things be as they be. I call it kind o' providential,"



said Sol, giving a hoist to his breeches by means of a tug at his suspenders, which gesture was his usual indication that he was girding up the loins of his mind for an immediate piece of work; and, turning forthwith, he brought in a mighty armful of wood, with massive back-log and fore-stick, well grizzled and bearded with the moss that showed that they were but yesterday living children of the forest.

The fire soon leaped and crackled and roared, being well fed with choice split hickory sticks of last year, of which Sol kept ample store; and very soon the big brass kettle was swung over upon the old iron crane, and the sacrificial water was beginning to simmer briskly, while Miss Asphyxia prepared breakfast, not only for herself and Sol, but for Primus King, a vigorous old negro, famed as a sort of high-priest in all manner of butchering operations for miles around. Primus lived in the debatable land between Oldtown and Needmore, and so was at the call of all who needed an extra hand in both parishes.

The appearance of Primus at the gate in his butcher's frock, knife in hand, in fact put an end in Miss Asphyxia's mind to all thoughts apart from the present eventful crisis; and she hastened to place upon the table the steaming sausages which, with her usual despatch, had been put down for their morning meal. A mighty pitcher of cider flanked this savoury dish, to which Primus rolled delighted eyes at the moment of sitting down. The time had not yet dawned, in those simple, old New England days, when the black skin of the African was held to disqualify him from a seat at the social board with the men whom he joined in daily labour. The strength of the arm, and the skill of the hand, and the willingness of the mind of the workman, in those days, were his passport to equal social rights: and old Primus took rank, in the butchering season, as in fact a sort of leader and com-

mander. His word was law upon all steps and stages of those operations which should transform the plethoric, obese inhabitants of the sty into barrels of pink-hued salt-pork, or savoury hams and tenderloins and spareribs, or immense messes of sausage-meat.

Concerning all these matters, Primus was an oracle. His fervid Ethiopian nature glowed with a broad and visible delight, his black face waxed luminous with the oil of gladness, while he dwelt on the savoury subject, whereon, sitting at breakfast, he dilated with an unctuous satisfaction that soothed the raven down of darkness in Miss Asphyxia's perturbed mind, till something bearing a distant analogy to a smile played over her rugged features.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### The Day in Fairy-land.

Our little travellers, meanwhile, had had a prosperous journey along the rocky road between Needmore and Old-town, in which Sol had planted their feet. There was a great, round-orbed, sober-eyed October moon in the sky, that made everything as light as day; and the children were alive in every nerve with the keen interest of their escape.

"We are going just as Hensel and Grettel did," said the little girl. "You are Hensel, and I am Grettel, and Miss Asphyxia is the old witch. I wish only we could have burnt her up in her old oven before we came away!"

"Now, Tina, you mustn't wish such things *really*," said the boy, somewhat shocked at such very extreme measures. "You see, what happens in stories wouldn't do *really* to happen."

"Oh, but Harry, you don't know how I *hate*—how I *h—ate* Miss Sphyxy! I hate her—most as much as I love you!"

"But, Tina, mother always told us it was wicked to hate anybody. We must love our enemies."

"You don't love Old Crab Smith, do you?"

"No, I don't; but I try not to hate him," said the boy. "I won't think anything about him."

"I can't help thinking," said Tina; "and when I think, I am so angry! I feel such a burning in here!" she said, striking her little breast; "it's just like fire!"

"Then don't think about her at all," said the boy; "it isn't pleasant to feel that way. Think about the whippoorwills singing in the woods over there,—how plain they say it, don't they?—and the frogs, all singing, with their little, round, yellow eyes looking up out of the water; and the moon looking down on us so pleasantly! she seems just like mother!"

"O Harry, I'm so glad," said the girl, suddenly throwing herself on his neck and hugging him,—“I'm so glad we're together again! Wasn't it wicked to keep us apart,—we poor children?"

"Yes, Tina, I *am* glad," said the boy, with a steady, quiet, inward sort of light in his eyes; "but, baby, we can't stop to say so much, because we must walk fast and get way, way, way off before daylight; and you know Miss Sphyxy always gets up early,—don't she?"

"Oh dear, yes! She always poked me out of bed before it was light,—hateful old thing! Let's run as fast as we can, and get away!"

And with that she sprang forward, with a brisk and onward race, over the pebbly road, down a long hill, laughing as she went, and catching now at a branch of sweetbrier that overhung the road, and now at the tags of sweet-fern, both laden and hoary with heavy autumnal dews, till finally, her little foot tripping over a stone, she fell and grazed her arm sadly. Her brother lifted her up, and wiped the tears from

her great, soft eyes with her blue check apron, and talked to her in that grandfatherly way that older children take such delight in when they feel the care of younger ones.

"Now, Tina, darling, you shouldn't run so wild. We'd better go pretty fast steadily, than run and fall down. But I'll kiss the place, as mother used to."

"I don't mind it, Hensel,—I don't mind it," she said, controlling the quivering of her little resolute mouth. "That scratch came for *liberty*; but this," she said, showing a long welt on her other arm,—"*this was slavery*. She struck me there with her great ugly stick. Oh, I never *can* forgive her!"

"Don't let's talk any more, baby; let's hurry on. She *never* shall get you again; I'll fight for you till I die, first!"

"You'd kill 'em all, wouldn't you? You would have knocked her down, wouldn't you?" said Tina, kindling up with that inconsiderate exultation in the powers of an elder brother which belongs to childhood. "I knew you would get me away from her, Harry,—I knew you would."

"But now," said Harry, "you just keep hold of my hand, and let's run together, and I'll hold you up. We must run fast, after all, because maybe they will harness up the waggon when daylight comes, and come out to look for us."

"Well, if it's only Sol comes," said the little girl, "I sha'n't care; for he would only carry us on farther."

"Ay, but you may be sure Miss Asphyxia would come herself."

The suggestion seemed too probable, and the two little pairs of heels seemed winged by it as they flew along, their long shadows dancing before them on the moonlit road, like spiritual conductors. They made such good headway that the hour which we have already recorded, when Miss As-

phyxia's slumbers were broken, found the pair of tiny pilgrims five miles away on the road to Oldtown.

"Now, Tina," said the boy, as he stopped to watch the long bars of crimson and gold that seemed to be drawing back and opening in the eastern sky, where the sun was flaring upward an expectant blaze of glory, "only look there! Isn't it so wonderful? It's worth being out here only to see it. There! there! there! the sun is coming! Look! Only see that bright-red maple,—it seems all on fire!—now that yellow chestnut, and that old pine-tree! Oh, see, see those red leaves! They are like the story papa used to tell of the trees that bore rubies and emeralds. Aren't they beautiful!"

"Set me on the fence, so as I can see," said Tina. "O Harry, it's beautiful! And to think that we can see it together!"

Just at this moment they caught the distant sound of wheels.

"Hurry, Tina! Let me lift you over the fence," said the boy; "they are coming!"

How the little hearts beat, as both children jumped down into a thicket of sweet-fern, heavy and wet with morning dew! The lot was one of those confused jungles which one often sees hedging the course of rivers in New England. Groups of pine and hemlock grew here and there, intermixed with low patches of swampy land, which were waving with late wild-flowers and nodding swamp-grasses. The children tore their way through golden-rods, asters, and cat-tails to a little elevated spot where a great flat rock was surrounded by a hedge of white-pine. This was precisely the shelter they wanted; for the pines grew so thickly around it as completely to screen it from sight from the road, while it was open to the warm beams of the morning sun.

"Cuddle down here, Tina," said Harry, in a whispering voice, as if he feared the driver in the rattling farm-waggon might hear them.

"Oh, what a nice little house the trees make here!" said Tina. "We are as snug here and as warm as can be; and only see what a nice white and green carpet there is all over the rock!"

The rock, to be sure, was all frothed over with a delicate white foam of moss, which, later in the day, would have crackled and broken in brittle powder under their footsteps, but which now, saturated by the heavy night-dews, only bent under them, a soft, elastic carpet.

Their fears were soon allayed when, peeping like scared partridges from their cover, they saw a farm-waggon go rattling by from the opposite direction to that in which Miss Asphyxia lived.

"Oh, it's nobody for us; it comes the other way," said the boy.

It was, in fact, Primus King, going on his early way to preside over the solemnities of pig-killing.

"Then, Hensel, we are free," said the little girl; "nobody will catch us now. They could no more find us in this lot than they could find a little, little tiny pin in the hay-mow."

"No, indeed, Tina; we are safe now," said the boy.

"Why don't you call me Grettel? We will play—be Hensel and Grettel; and who knows what luck will come to us?"

"Well, Grettel then," said the boy, obediently. "You sit now, and spread out your frock in the sun to dry, while I get out some breakfast for you. Old Aunty Smith has filled my basket with all sorts of good things."

"And nice old Sol,—he gave us his pie," said Tina. "I

love Sol, though he is a funny-looking man. You ought to see Sol's hand, it's so big! And his feet,—why, one of his shoes would make a good boat for me! But he's a queer old dear, though, and I love him."

"What shall we eat first?" said the boy,—“the bread and butter, or the cookies, or the doughnuts, or the pie?"

"Let's try a little of all of them," said young madam.

"You know, Tina," said the boy, in a slow, considerate way, "that we must take care of this, because we don't know when we'll get any more. There's got to be a dinner and a supper got out of this at any rate."

"Oh, well, Hensel, you do just as you please with it, then; only let's begin with Sol's pie and some of that nice cheese, for I am so hungry! And then, when we have had our breakfast, I mean to lie down in the sun, and have a nap on this pretty white moss. O Harry, how pretty this moss is! There are bright little red things in it, as bright as mother's scarlet cloak. But oh, Harry, look, quick! don't say a word! There's a squirrel! How bright his little eyes are! Let's give him some of our breakfast."

Harry broke off a crumb of cake and threw it to the little striped-backed stranger.

"Why, he's gone like a wink," said the girl. "Come back, little fellow; we shan't hurt you."

"Oh, hush, Tina, he's coming! I see his bright eyes. He's watching that bit of cake."

"There, he's got it and is off!" said Tina, with a shriek of delight. "See him race up that tree with it!"

"He's going to take it home to his wife."

"His wife!" said Tina, laughing so hard at Harry's wit that she was obliged to lay down her pyc. "Has he got a wife?"



"Why, of course he has," said Harry, with superior wisdom.

"I'm *your* wife, ain't I?" said Tina, contentedly.

"No. You're my little sister, and I take care of you," said the boy. "But people can't have their sisters for wives; the Bible says so."

"Well, I can be just *like* your wife; and I'll mend your clothes and knit your stockings when I get bigger."

To which practical view of matrimonial duties Harry gave a grave assent.

Not a striped-backed squirrel, or a bobolink, or a cat-bird, in the whole pasture-lot, had better spirits than our two little travellers. They were free; they were together; the sun was shining and birds were singing; and as for the future, it was with them as with the birds. The boy, to be sure, had a share of forethought and care, and deemed himself a grown man acting with most serious responsibility for his light-headed little sister; but even in him this was only a half-awakening from the dream-land of childhood.

When they had finished their breakfast, he bethought him of his morning prayers, and made Tina kneel down beside him while he repeated psalm and hymn and prayer, in which she joined with a very proper degree of attention. When he had finished, she said, "Do you know, Hensel, I haven't said my prayers a single once since I've been at Miss Asphyxia's?"

"Why, Tina?"

"Well, you see, there wasn't anybody to say them to, now mother is gone; and you were not there."

"But you say them to God, Tina."

"Oh, He's so far off, and I'm so little, I can't say them to Him. I must say them to somebody I can see. Harry, where is mother gone?"

"She's gone to heaven, Tina."

"Where is heaven?"

"It's up in the sky, Tina," said the boy, looking up into the deep cloudless blue of an October sky, which, to say the truth, is about as celestial a thing as a mortal child can look into; and as he looked, his great blue eyes grew large and serious with thoughts of his mother's last wonderful words.

"If it's up in the sky, why did they dig down into the ground, and put her in that hole?" said the little sceptic.

"It is her soul that went up. Her body is planted like a beautiful flower. She will come up by and by; and we shall see her again, if we are good children."

Tina lay back on the white moss, with only a fringy bough of white-pine between her and the deep eternal blue, where the thinnest films of white clouds were slowly sailing to and fro. Her spiritual musings grew, to say the truth, rather confused. She was now very tired with her night tramp; and the long fringes fell over her great dark eyes, as a flower shuts itself, and she was soon asleep.

The boy sat watching her a while, feeling soothed by the calm, soft sunshine, and listening to the thousand sweet lullaby-notes which Nature is humming to herself, while about her great world-housework, in a calm October morning. The locusts and katydids grated a drowsy, continuous note to each other from every tree and bush; and from a neighbouring thicket a lively-minded cat-bird was giving original variations and imitations of all sorts of bird voices and warblings; while behind the tangled thicket which fringed its banks came the prattle of a hidden river, whose bright brown waters were gossiping, in a pleasant, constant chatter, with the many-coloured stones on the bottom; and when the light breezes wandered hither and thither, as your

idle breezes always will be doing, they made little tides and swishes of sound among the pine-trees, like the rising and falling of sunny waters on the sea-shore.

Altogether, it was not long before Harry's upright watch over his sister subsided into a droop upon one elbow, and finally the little curly head went suddenly down on to his sister's shoulder; and then they were fast asleep,—as nice a little pair of babes in the wood as ever the robins could cover up. They did not awake till it was almost noon. The sun was shining warm and cloudless, and every bit of dew had long been dried; and Tina, in refreshed spirits, proposed that they should explore the wonders of the pasture-plot,—especially that they should find out where the river was whose waters they heard gurgling behind the leafy wall of wild vines.

“We can leave our basket here in our little house, Hensel. See, I set it in here, way, way in among the pine-trees; and that's my little green closet.”

So the children began picking their way through the thicket, guided by the sound of the water.

“O Tina!” said the boy; “look there, over your head!”

The object pointed out was a bough of a wild grape-vine, heavily laden with ripe purple grapes.

“Oh, wild grapes!” said Tina. “Harry, do get them!”

Harry soon pulled the bough down within reach, and the children began helping themselves.

“I'm going to take an apronful up to the tree, and put into our closet,” said Tina; “and we shall have a nice store there.”

“But, Tina, we can't live there on the rock,” said the boy; “we must walk on and get to Oldtown sometime.”

“Oh, well, we have the whole long, long day for it,” said

the girl, "and we may as well have a good time now; so, when I've put up these grapes, we'll see where the river is."

A little scrambling and tearing through vines soon brought the children down to the banks of a broad, rather shallow river, whose waters were of that lustrous yellow-brown which makes every stone gleam up from the bottom in mellow colours, like the tints through the varnish of an old picture. The banks were a rampart of shrubbery and trees hung with drapery of wild vines, now in the brilliancy of autumnal colouring. It is not surprising that exclamations of delight and wonder burst from both children. An old hemlock that hung slantwise over the water opposite was garlanded and interwoven through all its dusky foliage with wreaths and pendants of the Virginia creeper, now burning in the brilliant carmine and scarlet hues of autumn. Great soft, powdery clumps of golden-rod projected their heads from the closely interwoven thicket, and leaned lovingly over the stream, while the royal purple of tall asters was displayed in bending plumage at their side. Here and there, a swamp-maple seemed all one crimson flame; while greener shrubbery and trees, yet untouched by frosts, rose up around it, as if purposely to give background and relief to so much colour. The rippling surface of the waters, as they dashed here and there over the stones, gave back coloured flashes from the red, yellow, crimson, purple, and green of the banks; while ever and anon little bright leaves came sailing down the stream, all moist and brilliant, like so many floating gems.

The children clapped their hands, and began, with sticks, fishing them towards the shore. "These are our little boats," they said. So they were,—fairy boats, coming from the land of nowhere, and going on to oblivion, shining and fanciful, like the little ones that played with them.

"I declare," said Tina, "I mean to take off my shoes and stockings, and wade out to that little island where those pretty white stones are. You go with me."

"Well, Tina, wait till I can hold you."

And soon both the little pairs of white feet were slipping and spattering among the pebbles at the bottom. On the way, Tina made many efforts to entrap the bright rings of sunlight on the bottom, regardless of the logic with which Harry undertook to prove to her that it was nothing but the light, and that she could not catch it; and when they came to the little white gravelly bank, they sat down and looked around them with great content.

"We're on a desolate island, aren't we, Hensel?" said Tina. "I like desolate islands," she added, looking around her, with the air of one who had had a wide experience of the article. "The banks here are so high, and the bushes so thick, that Miss Asphyxia could not find us if she were to try. We'll make our home here."

"Well, I think, Tina, darling, that it won't do for us to stay here very long," said Harry. "We must try to get to some place where I can find something to do, and some good, kind woman to take care of you."

"O Harry, what's the use of thinking of that,—it's so bright and pleasant, and it's so long since I've had you to play with! Do let's have one good, pleasant day alone among the flowers! See how beautiful everything is!" she added, "and it's so warm and quiet and still, and all the birds and squirrels and butterflies are having such a good time. I don't want anything better than to play about out in the woods with you."

"But where shall we sleep nights, Tina?"

"Oh, it was so pleasant last night, and the moon shone so

bright, I would not be afraid to cuddle down under a bush with you, Harry.

"Ah, Tina! you don't know what may come. The moon don't shine all night, and there may be cold and wind and rain, and then where would we be? Come, darling, let's go on; we can walk in the fields by the river, and so get down to the place Sol told us about."

So at last the little fanciful body was persuaded to wade back from her desolate island, and to set out once more on her pilgrimage. But even an older head than hers might have been turned by the delights of that glorious October day, and gone off into a vague trance of bliss, in which the only good of life seemed to be in luxurious lounging and dreamy enjoyment of the passing hour. Nature in New England is, for the most part, a sharp, determined matron, of the Miss Asphyxia school. She is shrewd, keen, relentless, energetic. She runs through the seasons a merciless express-train, on which you may jump if you can, at her hours, but which knocks you down remorselessly if you come in her way, and leaves you hopelessly behind if you are late. Only for a few brief weeks in the autumn does this grim, belligerent female condescend to be charming; but when she does set about it, the veriest Circe of enchanted isles could not do it better. Airs more dreamy, more hazy, more full of purple light and lustre, never lay over Cyprus or Capri than those which each October overshadow the granite rocks and prickly chestnuts of New England. The trees seem to run no longer sap, but some strange liquid glow; the colours of the flowers flame up, from the cold, pallid delicacy of spring, into royal tints wrought of the very fire of the sun and the hues of evening clouds. The humblest weed, which we trod under our foot unnoticed in summer, changes with the first frost into some coloured marvel, and lifts itself up into a study

for a painter,—just as the touch of death or adversity often strikes out in a rough nature traits of nobleness and delicacy before wholly undreamed of.

The children travelled onward along the winding course of the river, through a prairie-land of wild-flowers. The whole tribe of asters—white, lilac, pale blue, and royal purple—were rolling in perfect billows of blossoms around them, and the sprays of golden-red often rose above their heads, as they crackled their way through the many-coloured thickets. The children were both endowed with an organisation exquisitely susceptible to beauty, and the flowers seemed to intoxicate them with their variety and brilliancy. They kept gathering from right to left without any other object than the possession of a newer and fairer spray, till their little arms were full; and then they would lay them down to select from the mass the choicest, which a while after would be again thrown by for newer and fairer treasures. Their motion through the bushes often disturbed clouds of yellow butterflies, which had been hanging on the fringes of the tall purple asters, and which rose toying with each other, and fluttering in ethereal dances against the blue sky, looking like whirls and eddies of air-flowers. One of the most brilliant incidents in the many-coloured pictures of October days is given by these fluttering caprices of the butterflies. Never in any other part of the season are these airy tribes so many and so brilliant. There are, in particular, whole armies of small, bright yellow ones, which seem born for no other purpose than to make effective and brilliant contrasts with those royal-purple tints of asters, and they hang upon them as if drawn to them by some law of affinity in their contrasting colours.

Tina was peculiarly enchanted with the fanciful fellowship of these butterflies. They realised exactly her ideal of



existence, and she pointed them out to Harry as proof positive that her own notion of living on sunshine and flowers was not a bad one. She was quite sure that they could sleep out all night if the butterflies could, and seemed not to doubt that they would fancy her as a bed-fellow.

Towards sundown, when the children were somewhat weary of wandering, and had consumed most of the provisions in their basket, they came suddenly on a little tent pitched in the field, at the door of which sat an old Indian woman weaving baskets. Two or three red-skinned children, of about the same age as our wanderers, were tumbling and kicking about on the ground in high frolic, with about as many young puppies, who were scratching, rolling, and biting, with their human companions, in admirable spirits. There was a fire before the door, over which a pot was swung from a frame of crossed sticks, the odour of which steamed up, suggestive of good cheer.

The old Indian woman received the children with a broad, hearty grin, while Harry inquired of her how far it was to Oldtown. The old squaw gave it as her opinion, in very Indian English, that it was "muchee walkee" for little white boy, and that he had best stay with her that night and go on to-morrow.

"There, Harry," said Tina, "now you see just how it is. This is a nice little house for us to sleep in, and oh! I see such pretty baskets in it."

The old woman drew out a stock of her wares, from which she selected a small, gaily-painted one, which she gave to the children; in short, it was very soon arranged that they were to stop to supper and spend the night with her. The little Indians gathered around them and surveyed them with grins of delight; and the puppies, being in that state of ceaseless effervescence of animal spirits which marks the indiscreet era

of puppyhood, soon had the whole little circle in a state of uproarious laughter.

By and by, the old woman poured the contents of the pot into a wooden trough, and disclosed a smoking mess of the Indian dish denominated succotash,—to wit, a soup of corn and beans, with a generous allowance of salt pork. Offering a large, clean clam-shell to each of the children, she invited them to help themselves.

Whether it was the exhilarating effect of a whole day spent on foot in the open air, or whether it was owing to the absolute perfection of the cookery, we cannot pretend to say, but certain it is that the children thought they had never tasted anything better; and Tina's spirits became so very airy and effervescent, that she laughed perpetually,—a state which set the young barbarians to laughing for sympathy; and this caused all the puppies to bark at once, which made more fun; so that, on the whole, a jollier supper company could nowhere be found.

After sundown, when the whole party had sufficiently fatigued themselves with play and laughing, the old woman spread a skin inside the tent, where Tina lay down contentedly between Harry and one of the puppies, which she insisted upon having as her own particular bed-fellow. Harry knelt down to his prayers outside the tent, which being observed by the Indian woman, she clasped her hands, and seemed to listen with great devotion; and when he had finished, she said, "Me praying Indian; me much love Jesus."

The words were said with a tender gleam over the rough, hard, swarthy features; and the child felt comforted by them as he nestled down to his repose.

"Harry," said Tina, decisively, "let's we live here. I like to play with the puppies, and the old woman is good to us."

"We'll see, Tina," said wise little Harry.

## CHAPTER XV.

## The Old Manor-house.

ALAS! the next morning dawned wet and rainy. The wind flapped the tent-cover, and the rain put out the fire; and, what was worse, a cross, surly Indian man came home, who beat the poor old woman, and scattered the children and puppies, like partridges, into the bushes.

The poor old squaw took it all patiently, and seemed only intent on protecting the children from injuries and inconveniences on which she calculated as part of her daily lot. She beckoned them to her, and pointed across a field. "Go dat way: White folks dere be good to you." And she insisted on giving them the painted basket and some coarse corn bread.

They set off through the fields; but the wind was chilly and piercing, and the bushes and grass were wet, and Tina was in a doleful state. "O Harry, I wish we had a house to live in! Where do you suppose all the butterflies are staying that we saw yesterday? I'd like to go where they stay."

"Never mind, Tina; by and by we'll come to a house."

They passed a spot where evidently some Indians had been camping, for there were the remains of a fire; and Harry picked up some dry brush and refuse sticks around, and kindled it up bright for Tina to warm and dry herself. They sat there a while and fed the fire, till they began to feel quite warm. In one of Harry's excursions for sticks, he came back and reported a house in sight.

Sure enough, concealed from view behind a pine thicket was a large, stately mansion, the approach to which was through an avenue of majestic trees. The path to this was

all grown over with high grass, and a wilderness of ornamental shrubbery seemed to have twined and matted itself together in a wild labyrinth of utter desertion and neglect. The children made their way up the avenue through dripping grass and bushes that reached almost to their shoulders, and that drizzled water upon their partially dried garments in a way that made Tina shiver. "I'm so cold!" she said, pitifully. "The folks must let us come in to dry us."

They at last stood before the front door, in a sort of porch, which overshadowed it, and which rested on Corinthian pillars of some architectural pretension. The knocker was a black serpent with its tail in its mouth. Tina shuddered with some vague, inward dread, as Harry, rising on tiptoe, struck several loud blows upon it, and then waited to see who would appear.

The wind now rose, and tossed and swung the branches of the great trees in the avenue with a creaking, groaning sound. The shrubbery had grown around the house in a dense and tangled mass, that produced, in the dismal stormy weather, a sense of oppression and darkness. Huge lilacs had climbed above the chamber windows, and clumps of syringas billowed outward from the house in dense cascades; while roses and various kinds of more tender shrubbery, which had been deprived of light and air by their more hardy neighbours, filled up the space below with bare, dead branches, through which the wind sighed dolefully.

"Harry, do knock again," said Tina, when they had waited some time.

"It's no use," said the boy; "I don't think anybody lives here."

"Perhaps, if we 'go round to the back of the house, we shall find somebody," said Tina; "it's storming worse and worse." And the little girl plunged resolutely into the

thicket of dead shrubbery, and began tearing her way through.

There was a door on the side of the house, much like that in front; and there were spacious back buildings, which, joining the house, stretched far away in the shrubbery. Harry tried this side door. It was firmly locked. The children then began regularly trying every door that presented itself to their view. At last one, after considerable effort, gave way before their united exertions, and opened to them a shelter from the storm, which was now driving harder and harder. It was a place that had evidently been used for the storing of wood, for there was then quite a pile of fuel systematically arranged against the wall. An ancient axe, perfectly red with rust, was also hanging there."

"Well, we're in at last," said Tina, "but wet through. What a storm it is!"

"Perhaps we can get to some better place in the house," said Harry; here is wood, and we might make a fire and dry our clothes, and wait here till the storm is over."

He accordingly pushed against a door at the farther end of the wood-shed, and it opened before him into a large old kitchen. There was the ample fireplace of olden times, extending quite across one side, garnished with a crane having various hooks and other paraphernalia for the convenience of culinary operations.

"There, now," said Harry, "is a fireplace, and here is wood. Now we can dry ourselves. Just you wait here, and I'll go back and bring a brand from our fire, if the rain hasn't put it all out." And Harry turned, and hastily made the best of his way out of the house, to secure his treasure before it should be too late.

Tina now resolved to explore some of the other rooms. She opened a door which seemed to lead into a large dining-

hall. A heavy dining-table of dark wood stood in the middle of this room, and a large old-fashioned carved sideboard filled up an arched recess. Heavy mahogany chairs with stuffed leathern bottoms stood against the wall, but the brass nails with which they had been finished were green with rust. The windows of this room were so matted over with cobwebs, and so darkened by the dense shrubbery outside, as to give the apartment a most weird and forlorn appearance. One of the panes of the window had been broken, perhaps by the striking of the shrubbery against it; and the rain and snow beating in there had ruined the chair that stood below, for the seat of it was all discoloured with mould.

Tina shivered as she looked at this dreary room, and the tapping of her own little heels seemed to her like something ghostly; so she hastened to open another door. This led to a small apartment, which had evidently been a lady's boudoir. The walls were hung with tapestry of a dark-green ground, on which flowers and fruits and birds were represented in colours that yet remained brilliant, notwithstanding the dilapidated air of some portions of it. There was a fireplace in this room, and the mantel was choicely carved, of white Italian marble, and upon it were sundry flasks and vases of Venetian glass, of quaint and strange shapes, which the child eyed with awe-struck curiosity. By the side of the fireplace was a broad lounge or sofa, with a pile of cushions, covered with a rich but faded brocade, of a pattern evidently made to carry out the same design with the tapestry on the wall.

A harpsichord occupied another side of the room, and upon it were piled music-books and manuscript music yellow with age. There was a sort of Oriental guitar or lute suspended from the wall, of which one of the strings, being

broken, vibrated with the air of the door when the child made her way into the room, and continued quivering in a way that seemed to her nervous and ghostly. Still she was a resolute and enterprising little body; and though her heart was beating at a terrible rate, she felt a sort of mixture of gratified curiosity and exultation in her discovery.

"I wish Harry would come back," she said to herself. "We might make a fire in this pretty little room, and it would be quite snug, and we could wait here till the folks come home." How glad she was when the sound of his voice and footsteps broke the terrible loneliness! She ran out to him, exclaiming, "O Harry, we won't make a fire in this great, doleful old kitchen. I've found such a nice little room full of pretty things! Let me bring in some wood;" and, running to the wood-pile, she filled her arms.

"It was all I could do to find a brand with a bit of fire on it," said Harry. "There was only the least spark left, but I put it under my jacket and blew and blew, and now we have quite a bright spot in it," he said, showing with exultation a black brand with a round, fiery eye in it, which had much the appearance of a knowing old goblin winking at the children.

The desolate boudoir was soon a scene of much animation, as the marble hearth was strewn with chips and splinters.

"Let me blow, Harry," said Tina, "while you go and look for some more of this brushwood. I saw a heap in that wood-house. I'll tend the fire while you are gone. See," she said triumphantly to him, when he returned, dragging in a heavy pile of brushwood, "we'll soon have such a fire!"—and she stooped down over the hearth, laying the burnt ends of sticks together, and blowing till her cheeks were so aflame with zeal and exertion that she looked like a little live coal herself. "Now for it!" she said, as she broke bit after bit of the



brushwood. "See now, it's beginning to burn,—hear it crackle! Now put on more and more."

Very soon, in fact, the brushwood crackled and roared in a wide sheet of flame up the old chimney; and being now reinforced with stout sticks of wood, the fire took a solid and settled and companionable form,—the brightest, most hopeful companion a mortal could ask for in a chill stormy day in autumn.

"Now, Harry," said Tina, "let's dry our clothes, and then we will see what we can do in our house."

"But is it really ours?" said thoughtful Harry. "Who knows who it may belong to?"

"Do you think," said Tina, apprehensively, "that any giant lives here that has gone out and will come home again? Father used to tell us a story like that."

"There aren't really giants now-a-days, Tina," said Harry; "those are only stories. I don't think that it looks as if anybody had lived here for a great while. Things don't look as if anybody lived here, or was expecting to come back."

"Then we may as well live here as anybody," said Tina, "and I will keep house for you. I will roast some apples for our dinner,—I saw ever so many out here on the tree. Roast apples with our corn bread will be so good! And then we can sleep to-night on this great wide sofa,—can't we? Here, let me sweep up the chips we have made, and make our little house look nice."

"It must be a long time since any one has lived here," said Harry, looking up at the cobwebbed window, against which the shrubbery was dashing and beating in the fury of the storm, "and there can't be the least harm in our staying here till the storm is over."

"Such a strange pretty room this is!" said Tina, "and so

many strange pretty things in it! Do you know, Harry, I was almost afraid to be here while you were gone; but this bright warm fire makes such a difference. Fire is company, isn't it?"

When the little one had dried her clothes, she began, with a restless butterfly sort of motion, to investigate more closely the various objects of the apartment. She opened the harpsichord, and struck a few notes, which sounded rather discordantly, as an instrument which chill and solitude had smitten with a lasting hoarseness.

"Oh, horrid! This isn't pretty," she said. "I wonder who ever played on it? But, O Harry! come and look here! I thought this was another room in here, with a fire in it," she said, as she lifted a curtain which hung over a recess. "Look! it's only looking-glass in a door. Where does it go to? Let's see." And with eager curiosity she turned the knob, and the door opened, disclosing only a sort of inner closet, which had been evidently employed for a writing-cabinet, as a writing-table stood there, and book-cases filled with books.

What most attracted the attention of the children was a picture, which was hung exactly opposite the door, so that it met the children face to face. It was the image of a young girl, dressed in white, with long black curling hair falling down over her neck and shoulders. The dark eyes had an expression both searching and melancholy; and it was painted in that peculiar manner, which produces such weird effects on the beholder, in which the eyes seem to be fixed upon the spectator, and to follow him on whichever side he stands.

"What a pretty lady! But she looks at us so!" said Tina, covering her eyes. "I almost thought it was a real woman."

"Whichever way we move, she looks after us," said Harry.

"She looks as if she would speak to us," said Tina; "she surely wants to say something."

"It is something very sad, then," said the boy, studying the picture attentively. "She was not sad as mother was," said he, with a delicate spiritual instinct reading the impression of the face. "Mother used to look very, very sad, but in a different way,—a better way, I think."

"Of course it isn't in the least like mother," said Tina. "Mother had soft, bright hair,—not black, like this; and her eyes were blue, like yours, Harry."

"I don't mean her hair or her eyes," said Harry; "but when mother was sad, she always used to pray. I don't think this one looks as if she would pray," said the boy, rather under his breath.

There was, in fact, a lurking sparkle of haughty determination in the depths of the mournful eyes, and a firm curve to the lines of the mouth, an arching of the neck, and a proud carriage of the head, that confirmed the boy's strictures, and indicated that, whatever sorrows might have crushed the poor heart that beat beneath that fair form, they were borne in her own strength, with no uplooking for aid.

Tina longed to open the drawers of the cabinet beneath the picture, but Harry held her hand. "Tina, dear, what would mother say?" he said reprovingly. "This isn't our house. Whoever owns it wouldn't think it was wrong for us to stay here in such a storm, but we certainly ought not to touch their things."

"But we may go through the house, and see all the rooms," said Tina, who had a genuine feminine passion for rummaging and whose curiosity was piqued to the extreme point by the

discoveries already made. "I shall be afraid to sleep here to-night, unless I know all that is in the house."

So the children went, hand in hand, through the various apartments. The house was one of those stately manors which, before the Revolutionary war, the titled aristocracy of England delighted to reproduce on the virgin soil of America. Even to this modern time, some of the old provincial towns in New England preserve one or two of these monuments of the pride and pomp of old colonial days, when America was one of the antechambers of the English throne and aristocracy.

The histories of these old houses, if searched into, present many romantic incidents, in which truth may seem wilder than fiction. In the breaking of the ties between the mother country and America, many of these stately establishments were suddenly broken up, and the property, being subject to governmental claims yet undecided, lay a long time unoccupied; the real claimants being in England, and their possessions going through all the processes of deterioration and decay incident to property in the hands of agents at a distance from the real owners. The moss of legend and tradition grew upon these deserted houses. Life in New England, in those days, had not the thousand stimulants to the love of excitement which are to be found in the throng and rush of modern society, and there was a great deal more of story-telling and romancing in real life than exists now; and the simple villagers by their firesides delighted to plunge into the fathomless abyss of incident that came from the histories of grand, unknown people across the water, who had established this incidental connexion with their neighbourhood. They exaggerated the records of the pomp and wealth that had environed them. They had thrilling legends of romantic and often tragic incidents, of which such houses had

been the theatres. More than one of them had its well-attested ghosts, which, at all proper hours, had been veritably seen to go through all those aimless ghostly perambulations and performances which, according to village legends, diversify the leisure of the spiritual state.

The house into which the children's wandering fortunes had led them was one whose legends and history formed the topic of many an excited hour of my childhood, as crooned over to me by different story-telling gossips; and it had, in its structure and arrangements, the evident impress of days nevermore to be reproduced in New England. Large and lofty apartments, some of them still hung with tapestry, and some adorned with arches and columns, were closed in from air and light by strong shutters, although a dusky glimmer came through the heart-shaped holes cut in them. Some of these apartments were quite dismantled and bare. In others the furniture was piled together in confusion, as if for the purpose of removal. One or two chambers were still thoroughly furnished, and bore the marks of having been at some recent period occupied; for there were mattresses and pillows and piles of bedclothing on the great, stately bedsteads.

"We might sleep in one of these rooms," said Harry.

"Oh, no, no!" said the child, clinging to him; "I should be afraid. That great, dreadful-looking, dark bed! And who knows what might be behind the curtains! Let me sleep in the bright little room, where we can see all around us. I should be afraid that lady in the closet would walk about these rooms in the night."

"Perhaps she did once," said Harry. "But come, let us go down. The wind blows and howls so about these lonesome rooms, it makes me afraid."

"How it rumbles down the chimneys!" said Tina; "and

now it squeals just as if somebody was hurting it. It's a terrible storm, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's well we are in a house at any rate," said Harry; "but let's go down and bring in wood, and I'll get some apples and pears off the trees out by the back door."

And so the two poor little swallows chattered as they built their small innocent nest in the deserted house, as ignorant of the great Before and After as if they had had wings and feathers, and round, bright bird-eyes, instead of curly, golden heads. Harry brought in a quantity of fruit in Tina's little checked apron, and, like two squirrels, they stored it under the old brocade sofa.

"Now ever so much wood in the hall here," said Tina, with the providence of a little housewife; "because when the dark night comes we shall be afraid to go into the wood-house."

Harry felt very large and very provident, and quite like a householder, as he brought armful after armful and laid it outside the door, while Tina arranged some apples to roast on the marble hearth. "If we only could get something to eat every day, we might live here always," she said.

And so that evening, when the night shadows came down darkly on the house, though the storm without thundered and beat and groaned amid the branches of the old trees, and rumbled and shook the chimneys of the solitary manor-house, there was one nook that presented as bright and warm a picture as two fair child-faces, with a background of strange antique furniture and surroundings, could furnish. The fire had burned down into great splendid glowing coals, in which the children, seated before it on the tapestried hearth-rug, saw all sorts of strange faces. Tina had insisted on keeping open the door of the cabinet where the beautiful lady was,

because, she said, she must be lonesome in that dark closet by herself.

"I wish she would only smile," she said, as the sharp spires of flame from a new stick of wood which she had just laid on, dancing up, made the face seem to become living and tremulous as if with emotion. "See, Hensel, she looks as if she were going to speak to us."

And hours later the fire still burned in the little boudoir; but the two pretty child-faces lay cheek to cheek in the wide motherly arms of the sofa, and the shadowy lady seemed to watch over them silently from her lonely recess.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### Sam Lawson's Discoveries.

THE evening was closing in sharp and frosty, with a lowering of wind and cloud that rendered fire-light doubly dear and welcome, as we all drew our chairs round the great, glowing fire in my grandmother's kitchen. I had my little block of wood, which served as a footstool, far in the cavernous depths of one end of the fireplace, close by Black Cæsar, who was busy making me a popgun, while my grandmother sat at the other end in her rocking-chair, rattling her knitting-needles. Uncle Fly had just frisked in, and was perched, as was his wont, on the very tip of his chair, where he sat fussily warming and rubbing his hands, much as a meditative blue-bottle performs the same operation with his fore feet.

"So," said my grandmother to my grandfather, in reproachful tones, "you've gone and shut the calf up from its mother."

"To be sure," said my grandfather; "that was fore-ordained and freely predetermined."



“Well, I say it’s a shame,” sputtered my grandmother,—  
“poor creturs!”

It was a part of the farming ordinance, when the calf was fated to be killed, to separate it for a day from its mother, a proceeding which never failed to excite the indignation of my grandmother, which she expressed always with as much life and freshness as if she had never heard of such a matter before in her life. She was not, to be sure, precisely aware what was to be done about it; but in a general way she considered calf-killing as an abominable cruelty, and the parting of calf and cow for a day beforehand as an aggravation. My grandfather was fond of meeting her with a sly use of some of the Calvinistic theological terms which abounded in her favourite writers. The most considerate of husbands often enjoy any quiet method of giving a sly tweak to some cherished peculiarity of their yokefellows; and there was the least suggestion of a smile hovering over my grandfather’s face,—which smile, in your quiet man, means two things,—first, that he is going to have his own way in spite of all you can say, and, secondly, that he is quietly amused by your opposition.

“I say it’s a shame,” quoth my grandmother, “and I always shall. Hear that poor cow low! She feels as bad as I should.”

“Mother,” said Aunt Lois, in an impatient tone, “I wonder that you can’t learn to let things go on as they must. What would you have? We must have fresh meat sometimes, and you eat as much as any of us.”

“I don’t care, it’s too bad,” said my grandmother, “and I always shall think so. If I had things *my* way, folks shouldn’t eat creatures at all.”

“You’d be a Brahmin,” said my grandfather.

“No, I shouldn’t be a Brahmin, either; but I know an old

cow's feelings, and I wouldn't torment her just to save myself a little trouble."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Sam Lawson, who came in with a long, lugubrious face, and an air of solemn, mysterious importance, which usually was the herald of some communication.

"Well, Sam," said my grandfather, "how are you?"

"Middlin', Deacon," said Sam, mournfully,—“only middlin'."

"Sit down, sit down," said my grandfather, "and tell us the news."

"Wal, I guess I will. How kind o' revivin' and cheerful it does look here," said Sam, seating himself in his usual attitude, with his hands over the fire. "Lordy massy, it's so different to our house! Hepsy hain't spoke a raily decent word to me since the general trainin'. You know, Deacon, Monday, a week ago, was general trainin' day over to Hopkinton, and Hepsy, she was set in the idee that I should take her and the young uns to muster. 'All right, Hepsy,' says I, 'ef I can borrow a hoss.' Wal, I walked and walked clean up to Captain Brown's to borrow a hoss, and I couldn't get none, and I walked clean down to Bill Peter's, and I couldn't get none. Finally Ned Parker, he lent me his'n. Wal, to be sure, his hoss has got the springhalt, that kind o' twitches up the waggin, and don't look so genteel as some; but, lordy massy, 'twas all I could get.' But Hepsy, she blamed me all the same. And then she was at me 'cause she hadn't got no gloves. Wal, I hadn't no gret o' change in my pocket, and I wanted to keep it for gingerbread and sich for the young uns, so I thought I'd jest borrow a pair for her, and say nothin'; and I went over and asked Mis' Captain Brown, and over to Mis' Dana's, and round to two or three places; and finally Lady Lothrop, she said she'd *give* me a old pair

o' hern. And I brought 'em to Hepsy; and do you believe, she throwed 'em right smack in my face. 'S'pose I'm goin' to wear such an old dirty pair as that?' says she. Wal, arter all, we sot out, and Hepsy, she got clear beat out; and when Hepsy does get beat out she has *spells*, and she goes on awful, and they last day arter day. Hepsy's spells is jest like these 'ere north-east storms,—they never do really clear off, but kind o' wear out, as 'twere,—and this 'ere seems to be about one of her longest. She was at me this mornin' fust thing 'fore I was out o' bed, cryin' and goin' on, and castin' on it up at me the men she might 'a' hed if she hadn't 'a' hed me, and the things they'd 'a' done for her, jest as if't was my fault. 'Lordy massy, Hepsy!' says I, 'I ain't t' blame. I wish with all my heart you hed 'a' hed any on 'em you'd ruther.' You see I wa' n't meanin' no 'fence, you know, but just a bein' kind o' sympathisin' like, and she flew at me 't oncet. Massy to us! why, you'd 'a' thought all them old Sodom and Gomorrah sinners biled down wa' n't nothin' to me. She did talk ridiculous. I tried to reason with her. Says I, 'Hepsy, see here now. Here you be in a good bed, in your own house, and your kindlin 's all split to make your fire,—and I split every one on 'em after twelve o'clock last night,—and you a goin' on at this 'ere rate. Hepsy,' says I, 'it's awful.' But, lordy massy, how that 'ere woman can talk! She begun agin, and I couldn't get in a word edge-ways, nor crossways, nor noways; and so I jest got up and went round to the tavern, and there I met Bill Moss and Jake Marshall, and we had some crackers and cheese and a little suthin' hot with it, and it kind o' 'curred to me, as Hepsy was in one o' her spells, it would be a good time to go kind o' Indianing round the country a spell till she kind o' come to, ye know. And so I thought I'd jest go t' other side o' Hopkinton and see Granny Walkers,—her that was

housekeeper to Lady Frankland, ye know,—and see if I couldn't rake out the pertickelars of that 'ere Dench house. That 'ere house has been a lyin' on my mind considerable, along back."

My ears began to prick up with great liveliness and animation at this sound; and, deserting Cæsar, I went over and stood by Sam, and surveyed him with fixed attention, wondering in the meantime how a house could lie on his mind.

"Well," said my grandfather, "what did you hear?"

"Wal, I didn't get over to her house; but when I'd walked a pretty good piece I came across Widdah Peter's son, Sol Peters,—you know him, Mis' Badger, he lives over in Needmore with a great spankin' old gal they call Miss Asphyxy Smith. You've heard of Miss Sphyxy Smith, hau't you, Mis' Badger."

"Certainly I have," said my grandmother.

"Miss Asphyxia Smith is a smart industrious woman," said Aunt Lois; "it isn't worth while to talk so about her. The world would be better off," she continued, eyeing Sam with an air of didactic severity, "if there were more people in it that keep to their own business, like Miss Sphyxy."

"Wal, spuz so," said Sam Lawson, with an innocent and virtuous droop, not in the slightest degree recognising the hint; "but now, you see, I'm coming to a pint. Sol, he asked me if anybody over to Oldtown had seen or heard anything of a couple of children that had run away from Needmore. There was a boy and a gal about nine or ten or under, that had been put out by the parish. The boy was livin' with Old Crab Smith, and the gal with Miss Sphyxy."

"Well, I pity the child that Miss Sphyxy Smith has taken

to bring up, I must say," said my grandmother. "What business have old maids a-taking children to bring up, I want to know? Why, it isn't every hen that 's fit to bring up chickens. How came the children there, anyway?"

"Wal, you see, there came a woman along to Crab Smith's with these 'ere children. Sol says they 're real putty children, —putty-behaved as ever he see. The woman, she was took down and died there. And so Old Crab, he took the boy; and Miss Sphyxy, she took the gal."

"'Too bad!" said my grandmother; "poor motherless babes, and nobody but Crab and Sphyxy Smith to do for 'em! Somebody ought to see about it."

"Wal, ye see, Sol, he said that Miss Sphyxy was as hard as a grindstone on this gal, and they kep' the boy and gal apart, and wouldn't let 'em see or speak to each other; and Sol says he never did pity any poor, lonesome little critter as he did that 'ere little gal. She used to lie a-bed nights, and sob and cry fit to break her little heart."

"I should like to go and talk to that woman!" said my grandmother, vengefully. "I wonder folks can be so mean! I wonder what such folks think of themselves, and where they expect to go to!"

"Wal, you see," continued Sam, "the young 'un was spicy; and when Miss Sphyxy was down on her too hard, the child, she fit her,—you know a rat'll bite, a hen will peck, and a worm will turn,—and finally it come to a fight between 'em; and Miss Sphyxy, she gin her an awful whippin'. 'Lordy massy, Sol,' says I, when Sol was a-tellin' me, 'you needn't say nothin' about it. That 'ere gal's got arms like a wind-mill; she's a regular brown thrasher, she is, only she ain't got no music in her; and ef she undertook to thrash me, she'd make out'."

"Well, what became of the children?" said my grandmother.

"Wal, you see, they run off together; fact is, Sol says he helped 'em off, and told 'em to come over to Oldtown. He says he told 'em to inquire for Deacon Badger's."

"I believe so," said Aunt Lois, severely. "Every man, woman, and child that wants taking care of is sent straight to our house."

"And good reason they should, Lois," said my grandmother, who was wide awake. "I declare, people ought to be out looking for them. 'Liakim, you are always flying about; why don't you look 'em up?"

Uncle Fly jumped up with alacrity. "To be sure, they ought to be looked after," he said, running to the window. "They ought to be looked after right off; they must be attended to." And Uncle Fly seemed to have an indefinite intention of pitching straight through the window in pursuit.

Sam Lawson eyed him with a serene gravity. He felt the importance of being possessed of all the information the subject in question admitted of, which he was determined to develop in an easy and leisurely manner, without any undue hurry or heat. "Mr. Sheril," he said, "the fust thing you'll hev to find out is *where they be*. It's no use tearin' round gen'ly. Where be they?—that's the question."

"To be sure, to be sure," said Uncle Fly. "Well, what you got to say about that?"

"Wal, you jest set down now, and be kind o' composed. I'm a-comin' to that 'ere pint in time," said Sam. "That 'ere's jest what I says to Sol. 'Sol,' says I, 'where be they?' And Sol, he says to me, 'I dunno. They might 'a' gone with the Indians,' says Sol, 'or they might 'a' got lost in the Oldtown woods;' and jest as we was a-talkin', we see old Obscure a-comin' along. He was out on a tramp over to



Hopkinton, Obscure was, and we asked him about 'em. Wal, Obscure, he says that a gal and boy like what we talked of had slep' in his wife's hut not long sence. You know Obscure's wife; she makes baskets, and goes round sellin' on 'em. I couldn't fairly get out o' Obscure what day't was, nor which way they went arter; but it was clear that them was the ones."

"Then," said Uncle Fly, "they must be somewhere. They may have lost their way in the Oldtown woods, and wandered up and down. There ought to be a party started out to look for 'em to-morrow morning."

"Now look here, Mr. Sheril," said Sam, "I think we'd better kind o' concentrate our idees on some one pint afore we start out, and I'll tell you what I'm a-thinkin' of. You know I was a tellin' you that I'd seen smoke coming out o' the chimbley of the Dench house. Now I jest thought them poor little robins might have jest got in there. You know it stormed like vengeance last week, and the little critters might have took shelter in that 'ere lonesome old house."

"Poor babes!" said my grandmother. "'Liakim, you go up there and see."

"Well, I tell you," said Uncle Eliakim, "I'll be up bright and early with my old horse and waggon, and go over to the Dench house and see about it."

"Wal, now," said Sam, "if you wouldn't mind, I'll just ride over with you. I wanted to kind o' go over that 'ere house. I've had it on my mind a good while."

"Is that the haunted house?" said I, in a whisper.

"Wal, it's the one they call haunted, but 'taint best to be 'fraid of nothin'," said Sam, surveying me paternally, and winking very obviously with one eye at Uncle Eliakim: quite forgetting the long roll of terrible suggestions he had made on the same subject a few evenings before.



"But you told about the man in a long red cloak, and the boy they threw in a well, and a woman in white."

"Lordy massy! what ears young ones has!" said Sam, throwing up his hands pathetically. "I never thought as you was round, Horace; but you mustn't never mind nothin' about it. There ain't really no such things as ghosts."

"I want to go over and see the house," said I.

"Well, well, you shall," said Uncle Fly; "but you must wake up bright and early. I shall be off by six o'clock."

"Well, now, mother," said Aunt Lois, "I just want to know if you are going to make our house an asylum for all the trampers and all the stray children in the neighbouring parishes? Have we got to keep these children, or are we going to send 'em back where they belong?"

"Send 'em back to Old Crab Smith and Miss Sphxy?" said my grandmother. "I'd like to see myself doing that."

"Well, then, are *we* going to maintain 'em?" said Aunt Lois; "because I want to know definitely what this is coming to."

"We'll see," said my grandmother. "It's our business to do good as we have opportunity. *We* mustn't reap the corners of our fields, nor beat off all our olive-berries, but leave 'em for the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, Scripture says."

"Well, I guess our olive-berries are pretty well beaten off now, and our fields reaped, corners and all," said Lois; "and I don't see why we needs must intermeddle with children that the selectmen in Needmore have put out."

Now Aunt Lois was a first-rate belligerent power in our family circle, and in many cases carried all before her; but my grandmother always bore her down on questions like these, and it was agreed, *nem. con.*, that the expedition to look up the wanderers should take place the next morning.

The matter being thus arranged, Sam settled back with a jocular freedom of manner, surveying the fire, and flopping his hands over it, smiling to himself in a manner that made it evident that he had a further reserve of something on his mind to communicate. "This 'ere Miss Sphyxy Smith's a rich old gal, and 'mazin' smart to work," he began. "Tell you, she holds all she gets. Old Sol, he told me a story 'bout her that was a pretty good un."

"What was it?" said my grandmother.

"Wal, ye see, you 'member old Parson Jeduthun Kendall, that lives up in Stonytown: he lost his wife a year ago last Thanksgiving, and he thought 't was about time he hed another; so he comes down and consults our Parson Lothrop. Says he, 'I want a good, smart, neat, economical woman, with a good property. I don't care nothin' about her bein' handsome. In fact, I ain't particular about anything else,' says he. 'Wal, Parson Lothrop,' says he, 'I think, if that's the case, I know jest the woman to suit ye. She owns a clear, handsome property, and she's neat and economical; but she's no beauty.' 'O, beauty is nothin' to me,' says Parson Kendall; and so he took the direction. Wal, one day he hitched up his old one-horse shay, and kind o' brushed up, and started off a-courtin'. Wal, the parson he come to the house, and he was tickled to pieces with the looks o' things outside, 'cause the house is all well shingled and painted, and there ain't a picket loose nor a nail wantin' nowhere. 'This 'ere 's the woman for me,' says Parson Kendall. So he goes up and raps hard on the front door with his whip-handle. Wal, you see, Miss Sphyxy, she was just goin' out to help get in her hay. She had on a pair o' clompin' cowhide boots, and a pitchfork in her hand, just goin' out, when she heard the rap. So she come jest as she was to the front door. Now you know Parson Kendall's a

little midget of a man; but he stood there on the step kind o' smilin' and genteel, lickin' his lips and lookin' so agreeable. Wal, the front door kind o' stuck,—front doors gen'ally do, ye know, 'cause they ain't opened very often,—and Miss Sphyxy, she had to pull and haul and put to all her strength, and finally it come open with a bang, and she 'peared to the parson, pitchfork and all, sort o' frowning like.

“‘What do you want?’ says she; ‘for you see Miss Sphyxy ain't nowadays tender to the men.’

“‘I want to see Miss Asphyxia Smith,’ says he, very civil, thinking she was the hired gal.

“‘I'm Miss Asphyxia Smith,’ says she. ‘What do you want o' me?’

“Parson Kendall, he jest took one good look on her, from top to toe. ‘*Nothin*,’ says he, and turned right round and went down the steps like lightnin’.

“The way she banged that 'ere door, Sol said, was lively. He jumped into his shay, and I tell you his old hoss was waked up for once. The way that 'ere old shay spun and bounced was a sight. And when he come to Oldtown, Parson Lothrop was walkin' out in his wig and cocked hat and ruffles, as serene as a pictur', and he too off his hat to him as handsome as a gentleman could; but Parson Kendall, he driv' right by and never bowed. He was awful riled, Parson Kendall was; but he couldn't say nothin', 'cause he'd got all he asked for. But the story got out, and Sol and the men heard it, and you'd a thought they'd never be done laughin' about it. Sol says, if he was to be hung for it the next minute, he never can help laughin' when he thinks how kind o' scared little Parson Kendall looked when Miss Asphyxia 'peared to him on the doorstep.”

“Well, well, well,” said Uncle Eliakim, “if we are going to the Dench house to-morrow morning, you must all be up

early, for I mean to be off by daylight; and we'd better all go to bed." With which remark he fluttered out of the kitchen.

"Liakim 'll be along here by ten o'clock to-morrow," said my grandfather, quietly. "I don't suppose he's promised more than forty people to do something for them to-morrow morning."

"Yes," said Aunt Lois, "and the lynch-pins of the waggon are probably lost, and the tire of the wheels sprung; but he'll be up before daylight, and maybe get along some time in the forenoon."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### The Visit to the Haunted House.

MY story now approaches a point in which I am soon to meet and begin to feel the force of a train of circumstances which ruled and shaped my whole life. That I had been hitherto a somewhat exceptional child may perhaps have been made apparent in the incidents I have narrated. I was not, in fact, in the least like what an average healthy boy ought to be. My brother Bill was exactly that, and nothing more. He was a good, growing, well-limbed, comfortably-disposed animal, reasonably docile, and capable, under fair government, of being made to go exactly in any paths his elders chose to mark out for him.

It had been settled, the night after my father's funeral, that my Uncle Jacob was to have him for a farm-boy, to work in the summer on the farm, and to pick up his education as he might at the district school in the winter season; and thus my mother was relieved of the burden of his support, and Aunt Lois of his superfluous activity in our home department. To me the loss was a small one; for except a very

slight sympathy of souls in the matter of fish-hooks and pop-guns, there was scarcely a single feeling that we had in common. I had a perfect passion for books, and he had a solid and well-pronounced horror of them, which seems to belong to the nature of a growing boy. I could read, as by a kind of preternatural instinct, as soon as I could walk; and reading was with me at ten years a devouring passion. No matter what the book was that was left in my vicinity, I read it as by an irresistible fascination. To be sure, I preferred stories, history, and lively narrative, where such material was to be had; but the passion for reading was like hunger,—it must be fed, and, in the absence of palatable food, preyed upon what it could find. So it came to pass that theological tracts, treatises on agriculture, old sermons,—anything, in short, that could be raked out of the barrels and boxes in my grandfather's garret,—would hold me absorbed in some shady nook of the house when I ought to have been out playing as a proper boy should. I did not, of course, understand the half of what I read, and miscalled the words to myself in a way that would have been laughable had anybody heard me; but the strange, unknown sounds stimulated vague and dreamy images in my mind, which were continually seething, changing, and interweaving, like fog-wreaths by moonlight, and formed phantasmagoria in which I took a quaint and solemn delight.

But there was one peculiarity of my childhood which I have hesitated with an odd sort of reluctance to speak of, and yet which so powerfully influenced and determined my life, and that of all with whom I was connected, that it must find some place here. I was, as I said, dreamy and imaginative, with a mind full of vague yearnings. But beside that, through an extreme delicacy of nervous organisation, my childish steps were surrounded by a species of vision or

apparition so clear and distinct that I often found great difficulty in discriminating between the forms of real life and these shifting shapes, that had every appearance of reality, except that they dissolved at the touch. All my favourite haunts had their particular shapes and forms, which it afforded me infinite amusement to watch in their varying movements.

Particularly at night, after I had gone to bed and the candle was removed from my room, the whole atmosphere around my bed seemed like that which Raphael has shadowed forth around his Madonna San Sisto,—a palpitating crowd of faces and forms changing in dim and gliding quietude. I have often wondered whether any personal experience similar to mine suggested to the artist this living background to his picture. For the most part, these phantasms were agreeable to me, and filled me with a dreamy delight. Sometimes distinct scenes or visions would rise before my mind, in which I seemed to look far beyond the walls of the house, and to see things passing wherein were several actors. I remember one of these, which I saw very often, representing a venerable old white-headed man playing on a violin. He was always accompanied by a tall, majestic woman, dressed in a strange, outlandish costume, in which I particularly remarked a high fur cap of a peculiar form. As he played, the woman appeared to move in time to the music. Another scene which frequently presented itself to my eyes was that of a green meadow by the side of a lake of very calm water. From a grove on one side of the lake would issue a miniature form of a woman clothed in white, with a wide golden girdle around her waist, and long, black hair hanging down to her middle, which she constantly smoothed down with both her hands, with a gentle, rhythmical movement, as she approached me. At a certain point



of approach, she always turned her back, and began a rapid retreat into the grove; and invariably as she turned there appeared behind her the image of a little misshapen dwarf, who pattered after her with ridiculous movements which always made me laugh. Night after night, during a certain year of my life, this pantomime never failed to follow the extinguishment of the candle, and it was to me a never-failing source of delight. One thing was peculiar about these forms, —they appeared to cause a vibration of the great central nerves of the body, as when a harp-string is struck. So I could feel in myself the jar of the dwarf's pattering feet, the soft, rhythmic movement of the little woman stroking down her long hair, the vibrations of the violin, and the steps of the oriental woman. Nobody knew of this still and hidden world of pleasure which was thus nightly open to me. My mother used often to wonder, when, hours after she put me to bed, she would find me lying perfectly quiet, with my eyes widely and calmly open. Once or twice I undertook to tell her what I saw, but was hushed up with, "Nonsense, child! there hasn't been anybody in the room; you shouldn't talk so."

The one thing that was held above all things sacred and inviolable in a child's education in those old Puritan days was to form habits of truth. Every statement received an immediate and unceremonious sifting, and anything that looked in the least like a departure from actual verity was met with prompt and stringent discouragement. When my mother repeated before Aunt Lois some of my strange sayings, she was met with the downright declaration, "That child will be an awful liar, Susy, if you don't keep a strict look-out on him. Don't you let him tell you any stories like that."

So I early learned silence; but my own confidence in the



reality of my secondary world was not a whit diminished. Like Galileo, who said, "It does move nevertheless, so I, when I once had the candle out at night, snapped my fingers mentally at Aunt Lois, and enjoyed my vision.

One peculiarity of these appearances was that certain of them seemed like a sort of *genü loci*,—shapes belonging to certain places. The apparition of the fairy woman with the golden girdle only appeared in a certain room where I slept one year, and which had across one of its corners a glass door called a beaufet. From this beaufet the vision took its rise, and when my parents moved to another house it never appeared again.

A similar event in my shadow-world had marked our coming to my grandmother's to live. The old violin-player and his wife had for a long time been my nightly entertainers; but the first night after we were established in the apartment given up to our use by Aunt Lois, I saw them enter as they usually did, seeming to come right through the wall of the room. They, however, surveyed the apartment with a sort of confused, discontented movement, and seemed to talk to each other with their backs to me; finally I heard the old woman say, "We can't stay here," and immediately I saw them passing through the wall of the house. I saw after them as clearly as if the wall had dissolved and given my eyes the vision of all out of doors. They went to my grandfather's wood-pile and look irresolutely round; finally they mounted on the pile, and seemed to sink gradually through it and disappear, and I never saw them afterwards.

But another of the companions of my solitude was more constant to me. This was the form of a young boy of about my own age, who for a year past had frequently come to me at night, and seemed to look lovingly upon me, and with

whom I used to have a sort of social communion, without words, in a manner which seemed to me far more perfect than human language. I *thought* to him, and in return I received silent demonstrations of sympathy and fellowship from him. I called him Harvey, and used, as I lay looking in his face, mentally to tell him many things about the books I read, the games I played, and the childish joys and griefs I had; and in return he seemed to express affection and sympathy by a strange communication, as lovers sometimes talk to each other by distant glances.

Attendant on all these exceptional experiences, perhaps resulting from them, was a peculiar manner of viewing the human beings by whom I was surrounded. It is common now-a-days to speak of the sphere or emanation that surrounds a person. To my childish mind there was a vivid perception of something of this nature with regard to every one whom I approached. There were people for whom I had a violent and instinctive aversion, whose presence in the room gave me a pain so positive that it seemed almost physical, and others, again, to whom I was strongly attracted, and whose presence near me filled me with agreeable sensations, of which I could give no very definite account. For this reason, I suppose, the judgments which different people formed concerning me varied extremely. Miss Mehitable, for example, by whom I was strongly attracted, thought me one of the most amiable of boys; while my poor Aunt Lois was certain I was one of the most trying children that ever were born.

My poor mother! I surely loved her, and yet her deficient vital force, her continual sadness and discouragement, acted on my nerves as a constant weight and distress, against which I blindly and instinctively struggled; while Aunt Lois's very footstep on the stair seemed to rouse every nerve

of combativeness in my little body into a state of bristling tension. I remember that when I was about six or seven years old I had the scarlet-fever, and Aunt Lois, who was a most rampant and energetic sick-nurse, undertook to watch with me; but my cries and resistance were so terrible that I was thought to be going deranged. Finally the matter was adjusted by Sam Lawson's offering to take the place, upon which I became perfectly tranquil, and resigned myself into his hands with the greatest composure and decorum. Sam was to me, during my childhood, a guide, philosopher, and friend. The lazy, easy, indefinite atmosphere of being that surrounded him was to me like the haze of Indian summer over a landscape, and I delighted to bask in it. Nothing about him was any more fixed than the wavering shadows of clouds; he was a boundless world of narrative and dreamy suggestion, tending to no point and having no end, and in it I delighted. Sam, besides, had a partiality for all those haunts in which I took pleasure. Near our house was the Oldtown burying-ground, where reposed the bones of generations of Indian sachems, elders, pastors, and teachers, converted from the wild forests, who, Christianised and churched, died in the faith, and were gathered into Christian burial. On its green hillocks I loved to sit and watch and dream long after sundown, or moonrise, and fancy I saw bands of wavering shapes, and hope that some one out of the crowd might have a smile of recognition or a spiritual word for me.

My mother and grandmother and Aunt Lois were horror-stricken by such propensities, indicating neither more nor less than indefinite coughs and colds, with early death in the rear; and however much in the way a little boy always seemed in those times in the active paths of his elders, yet it was still esteemed a primary duty to keep him in the world. "Horace,

what do you go and sit in the graveyard for?" would my grandmother say. "I should think you'd be 'fraid something would 'pear to you."

"I want something to appear, grandmother."

"Pshaw, pshaw! no, you don't. What do you want to be so odd for? Don't you ever say such things."

Sam, however, was willing to aid and abet me in strolling and lounging anywhere and at any hour, and lent a willing ear to my tales of what I saw, and had in his capacious wallet a pendent story or a spiritual precedent for anything that I could mention.

On this night, after he had left me, I went to bed with my mind full of the haunted house, and all that was to be hoped or feared from its exploration. Whether this was the cause or not, the result was that Harvey appeared nearer and more friendly than ever; and he held by his hand another boy; whose figure appeared to me like a faintly discerned form in a mist. Sometimes the mist seemed to waver and part, and I caught indistinct glimpses of bright yellow curls and clear blue eyes, and then Harvey smiled and shook his head. When he began to disappear, he said to me, "Good-bye;" and I felt an inward assurance that he was about to leave me. I said my "Good-bye" aloud, and stretched out my hands.

"Why, Horace, Horace!" said my mother, waking suddenly at the sound of my voice,—“Horace, wake up; you've been dreaming.”

I had not even been asleep, but I did not tell her so, and turning over, as I usually did when the curtain fell over my dreamland, I was soon asleep. I was wide awake with the earliest peep of dawn the next morning, and had finished dressing myself before my mother awoke.

Ours was an early household, and the brisk tap of Aunt

Lois's footsteps, and the rattling of chairs and dishes in the kitchen, showed that breakfast was in active preparation.

My grandfather's prediction with regard to my Uncle Eliakim proved only too correct. The fact was, that the poor man lived always in the whirl of a perfect Maelstrom of promises and engagements, which were constantly converging towards every hour of his unoccupied time. His old waggon and horse both felt the effects of such incessant activity, and such deficient care and attention as were consequent upon it, and were at all times in a state of dilapidation. Therefore it was that the next morning nine, ten, and eleven o'clock appeared, and no Uncle Eliakim.

Sam Lawson had for more than two hours been seated in an expectant attitude on our doorstep; but as the sun shone warm, and he had a large mug of cider between his hands, he appeared to enjoy his mind with great equanimity.

Aunt Lois moved about the house with an air and manner of sharp contempt, which exhibited itself even in the way she did her household tasks. She put down plates as if she despised them, and laid sticks of wood on the fire with defiant thumps, as much as to say that she knew some things that had got to be in time and place if others were not; but she spake no word.

Aunt Lois, as I have often said before, was a good Christian, and held it her duty to govern her tongue. True, she said many sharp and bitter things; but nobody but herself and her God knew how many more she would have said, had she not reined herself up in conscientious silence. But never was there a woman whose silence could express more contempt and displeasure than hers. You could feel it in the air about you, though she never said a word. You could feel it in the rustle of her dress, in the tap of her heels over the floor, in the occasional flash of her sharp, black eye. She was like a

thundercloud whose quiet is portentous, and from which you every moment expect a flash or an explosion. This whole morning's excursion was contrary to her mind and judgment,—an ill-advised, ill-judged, shiftless proceeding, and being entered on in a way as shiftless.

“What time do you suppose it is, mother?” she at last said to my grandmother, who was busy in her buttery.

“Massy, Lois! I daren't look,” called out my grandmother, who was apt to fall behindhand of her desires in the amount of work she could bring to pass of a morning. “I don't want to know.”

“Well, it's eleven o'clock,” said Lois, relentlessly, “and no signs of Uncle 'Liakim yet; and there's Sam Lawson, I s'pose he's going to spend the day on our doorstep.”

Sam Lawson looked after my Aunt Lois as she went out of the kitchen. “Lordy massy, Horace! I wouldn't be so kind o' unreconciled as she is all the time for nothin'. Now *I* might get into a fluster 'cause *I*'m kep' a waitin', but I don't. I think it's our duty to be willin' to wait quiet till things come round; this 'ere's a world where things can't be driv', and folks musn't set their heart on havin' everything come out jes so, 'cause ef they do they'll allers be in a stew, like Hepsy and Miss Lois there. Let 'em jest wait quiet, and things allers do come round in the end as well or better 'n ef you worried.”

And as if to illustrate and justify this train of thought, Uncle Eliakim's waggon at this moment came round the corner of the street, driving at a distracted pace. The good man came with such headlong speed and vivacity that his straw hat was taken off by the breeze, and flew far behind him, and he shot up to our door, as he usually did to that of the meeting-house, as if he were going to drive straight in.



"Lordy massy, Mr. Sheril!" said Sam, "don't get out; I'll get your hat. Horace, you jest run and pick it up; that's a good boy."

I ran accordingly, but my uncle had sprung out as lively as an autumn grasshopper. "I've been through a sea of troubles this morning," he said. "I lent my waggin to Jake Marshall yesterday afternoon, to take his wife a ride. I thought if Jake was a mind to pay the poor woman any attention, I'd help; but when he brought it back last night, one of the bolts was broken, and the harness gave out in two places."

"Want to know?" said Sam, leisurely examining the establishment. "I think the neighbours ought to subscribe to keep up your team, Mr. Sheril, for it's free to the hull on 'em."

"And what thanks does he get?" said Aunt Lois, sharply. "Well, Uncle 'Liakim, it's almost dinner-time."

"I know it, I know it, I know it, Lois. But there's been a lot o' things to do this morning. Just as I got the waggin mended, come Aunt Bathsheba Sawin's boy and put me in mind that I promised to carry her corn to grind; and I had to stop and take that round to mill; and then I remembered the pills that was to go to Hannah Dexter"——

"I dare say, and forty more things like it," said Aunt Lois.

"Well, jump in now," said Uncle Fly; "we'll be over and back in no time."

"You may as well put it off till after dinner now," said Aunt Lois.

"Couldn't stop for that," said Uncle 'Liakim; "my afternoon is all full now. I've got to be in twenty places before night." And away we rattled, while Aunt Lois stood looking after us in silent, unutterable contempt.



"Stop! stop! stop! Whoa! whoa!" said Uncle 'Liakim, drawing suddenly up. "There's that plaster for Widdah Peters, after all. I wonder if Lois wouldn't just run up with it." By this time he had turned the horse, who ran, with his usual straightforward, blind directness, in a right line against the doorstep again.

"Well, what now?" said Aunt Lois, appearing at the door.

"Why, Lois, I've just come back to tell you I forgot I promised to carry Widdah Peters that plaster for lumbago; couldn't you just find time to run up there with it?"

"Well, give it to me," said Aunt Lois, with sharp precision, and an air of desperate patience.

"Yes, yes, I will," said Uncle Fly, standing up and beginning a rapid search into that series of pockets which form a distinguishing mark of masculine habiliments,—searching with such hurried zeal that he really seemed intent on tearing himself to pieces. "Here 't is!—no, pshaw, pshaw! that's my handkerchief! Oh, here!—pschaw, pschaw! Why, where is it? Didn't I put it in?—or did I— Oh, here it is in my vest-pocket; no, though. Where a plague!" and Uncle Fly sprang from the waggon and began his usual active round-and-round chase after himself, slapping his pockets, now before and now behind, and whirling like a dancing dervis, while Aunt Lois stood regarding him with stony composure.

"If you *could* ever think where anything was, before you began to talk about it, it would be an improvement," she said.

"Well, fact is," said Uncle Eliakim, "now I think of it, Mis' Sheril made me change my coat just as I came out, and that's the whole on't. You just run up, Lois, and tell Mis' Sheril to send one of the boys down to Widdah Peters's with

the plaster she'll find in the pocket,—right-hand side. Come now, get up."

These last words were addressed, not to Aunt Lois, but to the horse, who, kept in rather a hungry and craving state by his master's hurrying manner of life, had formed the habit of sedulously improving every spare interval in catching at a mouthful of anything to eat, and had been accordingly busy in cropping away a fringe of very green grass that was growing up by the kitchen doorstep, from which occupation he was remorselessly twitched up and started on an impetuous canter.

"Wal, now I hope we're fairly started," said Sam Lawson; "and, Mr. Sheril, you may as well, while you are about it, take the right road as the wrong one, 'cause that 'ere saves time. It's pleasant enough anywhere, to be sure, to-day; but when a body's goin' to a place, a body likes to get there, as it were."

"Well, well, well," said Uncle Fly, "we're on the right road, ain't we?"

"Wal, so fur you be; but when you come out on the plains, you must take the fust left-hand road that drives through the woods, and you may jest as well know as much aforehand."

"Much obliged to you," said my uncle. "I reely hadn't thought particularly about the way."

"S'pose not," said Sam, composedly; "so it's jest as well you took me along. Lordy massy! there ain't a road nor a cart-path round Oldtown that I hain't been over, time and time agin. I believe I could get through any on 'em the darkest night that ever was hatched. Jake Marshall and me has been Indianing round these 'ere woods more times 'n you could count. It's kind o' pleasant, a nice bright day like this 'ere, to be a joggin' along in the woods. Every-

thing so sort o' still, ye know; and ye hear the chestnuts a droppin', and the wa'nuts. Jake and me, last fall, went up by Widdah Peters's one day, and shuck them trees, and got nigh about a good bushel o' wa'nuts. I used to kind o' like to crack 'em for the young 'uns, nights, last winter, when Hepsy 'd let 'em sit up. Though she's allers for drivin' on 'em all off to bed, and makin' it kind o' solitary, Hepsy is." And Sam concluded the conjugal allusion with a deep sigh.

"Have you ever been into the grounds of the Dench house?" said Uncle Fly.

"Wal, no, not reely; but Jake, he has; and ben into the house too. There was a fellow named 'Biah Smith that used to be a kind o' servant to the next family that come in after Lady Frankland went out, and he took Jake all over it once when there wa'n't nobody there. 'Biah, he said that when Sir Harry lived there, there was one room that was always kept shet up, and wa'n't never gone into, and in that 'ere room there was the long red cloak, and the hat and sword, and all the clothes he had on when he was buried under the ruins in that 'ere earthquake. They said that every year, when the day of the earthquake come round, Sir Harry used to spend it a fastin' and prayin' in that 'ere room, all alone. 'Biah says that he had talked with a fellow that was one of Sir Harry's body-servants, and he told him that Sir Harry used to come out o' that 'ere room lookin' more like a ghost than a live man, when he'd fasted and prayed for twenty-four hours there. Nobody knows what might have 'peared to him there."

I wondered much in my own quiet way at this story, and marvelled whether, in Sir Harry's long, penitential watchings, he had seen the air of the room all tremulous with forms and faces such as glided around me in my solitary hours.

"Naow, you see," said Sam Lawson, "when the earthquake come, Sir Harry, he was a driving with a court lady; and she, poor soul, went into 'tarnity in a minit,—'thout a minit to prepare. And I 'spect there ain't no reason to s'pose but what she was a poor, mis'able Roman Catholic. So her prospects couldn't have been noways encouragin'. And it must have borne on Sir Harry's mind to think she should be took and he spared, when he was a cuttin' up just in the way he was. I shouldn't wonder but she should 'pear to him. You know they say there is a woman in white walks them grounds, and 'Biah', he says, as near as he can find out, it's that 'ere particular chamber as she allers goes to. 'Biah said he'd seen her at the windows a wringin' her hands and a cryin' fit to break her heart, poor soul. Kind o' makes a body feel bad, 'cause, arter all, 'twan't her fault she was born a Roman Catholic,—now, was it?"

The peculiarity of my own mental history had this effect on me from a child, that it wholly took away from me all dread of the supernatural. A world of shadowy forms had always been as much a part of my short earthly experience as the more solid and tangible one of real people. I had just as quiet and natural a feeling about one as the other. I had not the slightest doubt, on hearing Sam's story, that the form of the white lady did tenant those deserted apartments; and so far from feeling any chill or dread in the idea, I felt only a sort of curiosity to make her acquaintance.

Our way to the place wound through miles of dense forest. Sir Harry had chosen it, as a retreat from the prying eyes and slanderous tongues of the world, in a region of woodland solitude. And as we trotted leisurely under the bright scarlet and yellow boughs of the forest, Uncle Eliakim and Sam discoursed of the traditions of the place we were going to.

"Who was it bought the place after Lady Frankland went to England?" said Uncle Eliakim.

"Wal, I believe 'twas let a spell. There was some French folks hed it 'long through the war. I heerd tell that they was pretty high people. I never could quite make out when they went off; there was a good many stories round about it. I didn't clearly make out how 'twas, till Dench got it. Dench, you know, got his money in a pretty peculiar way, ef all they says 's true."

"How's that?" said my uncle.

"Wal, they do say he got the great carbuncle that was at the bottom of Sepaug River. You've heard about the great carbuncle, I s'pose?"

"Oh, no! do pray tell me about it," said I, interrupting with fervour.

"Why, didn't you never hear 'bout that? want to know? Wal, I'll tell ye, then. I know all 'bout it. Jake Marshall, he told me that Dench fust told him, and he got it from old Mother Ketury, ye know,—a regular old heathen Injun Ketury is,—and folks do go so fur as to say that in the old times Ketury 'd 'a' ben took up for a witch, though I never see no harm in her ways. Ef there be sperits, and we all know there is, what's the harm o' Ketury's seeing on 'em?"

"Maybe she can't help seeing them," suggested I.

"Jes' so, jes' so; that 'ere's what I telled Jake when we's a talkin' it over, and he said he didn't like Dench's havin' so much to do with old Ketury. But la! old Ketury could say the Lord's Prayer in Injun, cause I've heard her; though she wouldn't say it when she didn't want to and she would say it when she did,—jest as the fit took her. But lordy massy! them wild Injuns, they ain't but jest half folks, they're so kind o' wild, and birchy and bushy as a body may say. Ef they take religion at all, it's got to be in their own way.

Ef you get the wild beast all out o' 'em, there don't somehow seem to be enough left to make an ordinary smart man of, so much on 'em's wild. Anyhow, Dench, he was thick with Ketury, and she told him all about the great carbuncle, and gin him directions how to get it."

"But I don't know what a great carbuncle is," I interrupted.

"Lordy massy, boy! didn't you never read in your Bible about the New Jerusalem, and the precious stones in the foundation, that shone like the sun? Wal, the carbuncle was one on 'em."

"Did it fall down out of heaven into the river?" said I.

"Mebbe," said Sam. "At any rate Ketury, she told 'em what they had to do to get it. 'They had to go out arter it jest exactly at twelve o'clock at night, when the moon was full. You was to fast all the day before, and go fastin', and say the Lord's Prayer in Injun afore you went; and when you come to where 'twas, you was to dive after it. But there wan't to be a word spoke; if there was, it went right off."

"What did they have to say the prayer in Indian for?" said I.

"Lordy massy, boy! I 'spose 'twas 'cause 'twas Indian sperits kep' a watch over it. Any rate 'twas considerable of a pull on 'em, 'cause Ketury, she had to teach 'em; and she wan't allers in the spirit on't. Sometimes she's crosser 'n torment, Ketury is. Dench, he gin her fust and last as much as ten dollars,—so Jake says. However, they got all through with it, and then come a moonlight night, and they went out. Jake says it was the splendidest moonlight ye ever did see,—all jest as still,—only the frogs and the turtles kind o' peepin'; and they didn't say a word, and rowed out past the pint there, where the water's ten feet deep, and he looked



down and see it a-shinin' on the bottom like a great star, making the waters all light like a lantern. Dench, he dived for it, Jake said; and he saw him put his hand right on it; and he was so tickled, you know, to see he'd got it, that he couldn't help hollerin' right out, 'There, you got it!' and it was gone. Dench was mad enough to 'a' killed him; 'cause when it goes that 'ere way, you can't see it agin for a year and a day. But two or three years arter, all of a sudden, Dench, he seemed to kind o' spruce up and have a deal o' money to spend. He said an uncle had died and left it to him in England; but Jake Marshall says you'll never take him in that 'ere way. He says he thinks it's no better 'n witchcraft, getting money that 'ere way. Ye see Jake was to have had half if they'd 'a' got it, and not gettin' nothin' kind o' sot him to thinkin' on it in a moral pint o' view, ye know. But, lordy massy! where be we, Mr. Sheril? 'This 'ere's the second or third time we've come round to this 'ere old dead chestnut. We ain't makin' no progress."

In fact there were many and crossing cart-paths through this forest, which had been worn by different farmers of the vicinity in going after their yearly supply of wood; and notwithstanding Sam's assertion of superior knowledge in these matters, we had, in the negligent inattention of his narrative, become involved in this labyrinth, and driven up and down, and back and forward, in the wood, without seeming at all to advance upon our errand.

"Wal, I declare for't, I never did see nothing beat it," said Sam. "We've been goin' jest round and round for this hour or more, and come out again at exactly the same place. I've heerd of places that's kep' hid, and folks allers gets sort o' struck blind and confused that undertakes to look 'em up. Wal, I don't say I believe in sich stories, but this 'ere is curious. Why, I'd 'a' thought I could 'a' gone straight to it



blindfolded, any day. Ef Jake Marshall was here, he'd go straight to it."

"Well, Sam," said Uncle Eliakim, "it's maybe because you and me got so interested in telling stories that we've missed the way."

"That 'ere's it, 'thout a doubt," said Sam. "Now I'll just hush up, and kind o' concentrate my 'tention. I'll just git out and walk a spell, and take an observation."

The result of this improved attention to the material facts of the case was, that we soon fell into a road that seemed to wind slowly up a tract of rising ground, and to disclose to our view, through an interlacing of distant boughs, the western horizon, toward which the sun was now sinking with long, level beams. We had been such a time in our wanderings, that there seemed a prospect of night setting in before we should be through with our errand and ready to return.

"The house stan's on the top of a sort o' swell o' ground," said Sam; "and as nigh as I can make it out, it must be somewhere about there."

"There is a woman a little way before us," said I; "why don't you ask her?"

I saw very plainly in a turn of the road a woman whose face was hidden by a bonnet, who stood as if waiting for us. It was not the white woman of ghostly memory, but apparently a veritable person in the every-day habiliments of common life, who stood as if waiting for us.

"I don't see no woman," said Sam, "where is she?"

I pointed with my finger, but as I did so the form melted away. I remember distinctly the leaves of the trees back of it appearing through it as through a gauze veil, and then it disappeared entirely.

"There isn't any woman that I can see," said Uncle Elia-

kim, briskly. "The afternoon sun must have got into your eyes, boy."

I had been so often severely checked and reproved for stating what I saw, that I now determined to keep silence, whatever might appear to me. At a little distance before us the road forked, one path being steep and craggy, and the other easier of ascent, and apparently going in much the same general direction. A little in advance, in the more rugged path, stood the same female form. Her face was hidden by a branch of a tree, but she beckoned to us. "Take *that* path, Uncle 'Liakim," said I; "it's the right one."

"Lordy massy!" said Sam Lawson, "how in the world should you know that? That 'ere is the shortest road to the Dench house, and the other leads away from it."

I kept silence as to my source of information, and still watched the figure. As we passed it, I saw a beautiful face, with a serene and tender expression, and her hands were raised as if in blessing. I looked back earnestly and she was gone.

A few moments after, we were in the grounds of the place, and struck into what had formerly been the carriage-way, though now overgrown with weeds, and here and there with a jungle of what was once well-kept ornamental shrubbery. A tree had been uprooted by the late tempest, and blown down across the road, and we had to make quite a little detour to avoid it.

"Now how are we to get into this house?" said Uncle Eliakim. "No doubt it's left fastened up."

"Do you see *that*?" said Sam Lawson, who had been gazing steadily upward at the chimneys of the house, with his eyes shaded by one of his great hands. "Look at that smoke from the middle chimbley."

"There's somebody in the house, to be sure," said Uncle

Eliakim; "suppose we knock at the front door here?"—and with great briskness, suiting the action to the word, he lifted the black serpent knocker, and gave such a rat-tat-tat as must have roused all the echoes of the old house, while Sam Lawson and I stood by him, expectant on the front steps.

Sam then seated himself composedly on a sort of bench which was placed under the shadow of the porch, and awaited the result with the contentment of a man of infinite leisure. Uncle Eliakim, however, felt pressed for time, and therefore gave another long and vehement rap. Very soon a chirping of childish voices was heard behind the door, and a pattering of feet; there appeared to be a sort of consultation.

"There they be now," said Sam Lawson, "jest as I told you."

"Please go round to the back-door," said a childish voice; "this is locked, and I can't open it."

We all immediately followed Sam Lawson, who took enormous strides over the shrubbery, and soon I saw the vision of a curly-headed, blue-eyed boy holding open the side door of the house.

I ran up to him. "Are you Harvey?" I said.

"No," he answered; "my name isn't Harvey, it's Harry; and this is my sister 'Tina,"—and immediately a pair of dark eyes looked over his shoulder.

"Well, we've come to take you to my grandmother's house," said I.

I don't know how it was, but I always spoke of our domestic establishment under the style and title of the female ruler. It was grandmother's house.

"I am glad of it," said the boy, "for we have tried two or three times to find our way to Oldtown, and got lost in the woods, and had to come back here again."

Here the female partner in the concern stepped a little

forward, eager for her share in the conversation. "Do you know old Sol?" she said.

"Lordy massy! I do," said Sam Lawson, quite delighted at this verification of the identity of the children. "Yes, I see him only day afore yesterday, and he was 'quirin' arterter you, and we thought we'd find you over in this 'ere house, 'cause I'd seen smoke a comin' out o' the chimblies. Had a putty good time in the old house, I reckon. Ben all over it pretty much, han't ye?"

"O yes," said Tina; "and it's such a strange old place,—a great big house with ever so many rooms in it!"

"Wal, we'll jest go over it, being as we're here," said Sam; and into it we all went.

Now there was nothing in the world that little Miss Tina took more native delight in than in playing the hostess. To entertain was her dearest instinct, and she hastened with all speed to open before us all in the old mansion that her own rummaging and investigating talents had brought to light, chattering meanwhile with the spirit of a bobolink.

"You don't know," she said to Sam Lawson, "what a curious little closet there is in here, with book-cases and drawers, and a looking-glass in the door, with a curtain over it."

"Want to know?" said Sam. "Wal, that 'ere does beat all. It's some of them old English folks's grander, I s'pose."

"And here's a picture of such a beautiful lady, that always looks at you, whichever way you go,—just see."

"Lordy massy! so't does. Wal, now, them drawers, mebber, have got curious things in 'em," suggested Sam.

"O yes, but Harry never would let me look in them. I tried, though, once when Harry was gone: but, if you'll believe me, they're all locked."

"Want to know?" said Sam. "That 'ere's a kind o' pity, now."

"Would *you* open them? You wouldn't, would you?" said the little one, turning suddenly round and opening her great wide eyes full on him. "Harry said the place wasn't ours, and it wouldn't be proper."

"Wal, he's a nice boy; quite right in him. Little folks mustn't touch things that ain't their'n," said Sam, who was strong on the moralities; though, after all, when all the rest had left the apartment, I looked back and saw him giving a sly tweak to the drawers of the cabinet on his own individual account.

"I was jest a makin' sure, you know, that 'twas all safe," he said, as he caught my eye, and saw that he was discovered.

Sam revelled and expatiated, however, in the information that lay before him in the exploration of the house. No tourist with Murray's guide-book in hand, and with travels to prepare for publication, ever went more patiently through the doing of a place. Not a door was left closed that could be opened; not a passage unexplored. Sam's head came out dusty and cobwebby between the beams of the ghostly old garret, where mouldy relics of antique furniture were reposing, and disappeared into the gloom of the spacious cellars, where the light was as darkness. He found none of the marks of the traditional haunted room; but he prolonged the search till there seemed a prospect that poor Uncle Eliakim would have to get him away by physical force, if we meant to get home in time for supper.

"Mr. Lawson, you don't seem to remember we haven't any of us had a morsel of dinner, and the sun is actually going down. The folks'll be concerned about us. Come, let's take the children and be off."

And so we mounted briskly into the waggon, and the old horse, vividly impressed with the idea of barn and hay at the end of his toils, seconded the vigorous exertions of Uncle Fly, and we rattled and spun on our homeward career, and arrived at the farmhouse a little after moonrise.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### Tina's Adoption.

DURING the time of our journey to the enchanted ground, my Aunt Lois, being a woman of business, who always knew precisely what she was about, had contrived not only to finish meritoriously her household tasks, and to supplement Uncle Eliakim's forgetful benevolence, but also to make a call on Miss Mehitable Rossiter, for the sake of unburdening to her her oppressed heart. For Miss Mehitable bore in our family circle the repute of being a woman of counsel and sound wisdom. The savour of ministerial stock being yet strong about her, she was much resorted to for advice in difficult cases.

"I don't object, of course, to doing for the poor and orphaned, and all that," said Aunt Lois, quite sensibly; "but I like to see folks seem to know what they are doing, and where they are going, and not pitch and tumble into things without asking what's to come of them. Now, we'd just got Susy and the two boys on our hands, and here will come along a couple more children to-night; and I must say I don't see what's to be done with them."

"It's a pity you don't take snuff," said Miss Mehitable, with a whimsical grimace. "Now, when I come to any of the cross-places of life, where the road isn't very clear, I just take a pinch of snuff and wait; but as you don't, just stay and get a cup of tea with me, in a quiet, Christian way, and

after it we will walk round to your mother's and look at these children."

Aunt Lois was soothed in her perturbed spirit by this proposition; and it was owing to this that, when we arrived at home, long after dark, we found Miss Mehitable in the circle around the blazing kitchen fire. The table was still standing with ample preparations for an evening meal,—a hot smoking loaf of rye and Indian bread, and a great platter of cold boiled beef and pork, garnished with cold potatoes and turnips, the sight of which, to a party who had had no dinner all day, was most appetising.

My grandmother's reception of the children was as motherly as if they had been of her own blood. In fact, their beauty and evident gentle breeding won for them immediate favour in all eyes.

The whole party sat down to the table, and, after a long and somewhat scattering grace, pronounced by Uncle Eliakim, fell to with a most amazing appearance of enjoyment. Sam's face waxed luminous as he buttered great blocks of smoking brown bread with the fruits of my grandmother's morning churning, and refreshed himself by long and hearty pulls at the cider-mug.

"I tell *you*," he said, "when folks hes been a ridin' on an empty stomach ever since breakfast, victuals is victuals; we learn how to be thankful for 'em; so I'll take another slice o' that 'ere beef, and one or two more cold potatoes and the vinegar, Mr. Sheril. Wal, chillen, this ere's better than bein' alone in that 'ere old house, ain't it?"

"Yes, indeed," piped Tina; "I had begun to be quite discouraged. We tried and tried to find our way to Oldtown, and always got lost in the woods." Seeing that this remark elicited sympathy in the listeners, she added, "I was afraid



we should die there, and the robins would have to cover us up, like some children papa used to tell about."

"Poor babes! just hear 'em," said my grandmother, who seemed scarcely to restrain herself from falling on the necks of the children, in the ardour of her motherly kindness, while she doubled up an imaginary fist at Miss Asphyxia Smith, and longed to give her a piece of her mind touching her treatment of them.

Harry remained modestly silent; but he and I sat together, and our eyes met every now and then with that quiet amity to which I had been accustomed in my spiritual friend. I felt a cleaving of spirit to him that I had never felt towards any human being before,—a certainty that something had come to me in him that I had always been wanting,—and I was too glad for speech.

He was one of those children who retreat into themselves and make a shield of quietness and silence in the presence of many people, while Tina, on the other hand, was electrically excited, waxed brilliant in colour, and rattled and chattered with as fearless confidence as a cat-bird.

"Come hither to me, little maiden," said Miss Mehitable, with a whimsical air of authority, when the child had done her supper. Tina came to her knee, and looked up into the dusky, homely face, in that still, earnest fashion in which children seem to study older people.

"Well, how do you like me?" said Miss Mehitable, when this silent survey had lasted an appreciable time.

The child still considered attentively, looking long into the great, honest, open eyes, and then her face suddenly rippled and dimpled all over like a brook when a sunbeam strikes it. "I do like you. I think you are good," she said, putting out her hands impulsively.

"Then up you come," said Miss Mehitable, lifting her into

her lap. "It's well you like me, because, for aught you know, I may be an old fairy; and if I didn't like you, I might turn you into a mouse or a cricket. Now how would you like that?"

"You couldn't do it," said Tina, laughing.

"How do you know I couldn't?"

"Well, if you did turn me into a mouse, I'd gnaw your knitting-work," said Tina, laying hold of Miss Mehitable's knitting. "You'd be glad to turn me back again."

"Heyday! I must take care how I make a mouse of you, I see. Perhaps I'll make you into a kitten."

"Well, I'd like to be a kitten, if you'll keep a ball for me to play with, and give me plenty of milk," said Tina, to whom no proposition seemed to be without possible advantages.

"Will you go home and live with me, and be my kitten?"

Tina had often heard her brother speak of finding a good woman who should take care of her; and her face immediately became grave at this proposal. She seemed to study Miss Mehitable in a new way. "Where do you live?" she said.

"Oh, my house is only a little way from here."

"And may Harry come to see me?"

"Certainly he may."

"Do you want me to work for you all the time?" said Tina; "because," she added in a low voice, "I like to play sometimes, and Miss Asphyxia said that was wicked."

"Didn't I tell you I wanted you for my little white kitten?" said Miss Mehitable, with an odd twinkle. "What work do you suppose kittens do?"

"Must I grow up and catch rats?" said the child.

"Certainly you will be likely to," said Miss Mehitable, solemnly. "I shall pity the poor rats when you are grown up."

Tina looked in the humorous, twinkling old face with a gleam of mischievous comprehension, and, throwing her arms around Miss Mehitable, said, "Yes, I like you, and I will be your kitten."

There was a sudden, almost convulsive pressure of the little one to the kind old breast, and Miss Mehitable's face wore a strange expression, that looked like the smothered pang of some great anguish blended with a peculiar tenderness. One versed in the reading of spiritual histories might have seen that, at that moment, some inner door of that old heart opened, not without a grating of pain, to give a refuge to the little orphan; but opened it was, and a silent inner act of adoption had gone forth. Miss Mehitable beckoned my grandmother and Aunt Lois into a corner of the fireplace by themselves, while Sam Lawson was entertaining the rest of the circle by reciting the narrative of our day's explorations.

"Now I suppose I'm about as fit to undertake to bring up a child as the old Dragon of Wantley," said Miss Mehitable; "but as you seem to have a surplus on your hands, I'm willing to take the girl and do what I can for her."

"Dear Miss Mehitable, what a mercy it'll be to her!" said my grandmother and Aunt Lois, simultaneously;—"if you feel that you can afford it," added Aunt Lois considerately.

"Well, the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field are taken care of somehow, as we are informed," said Miss Mehitable. "My basket and store are not much to ask a blessing on, but I have a sort of impression that an orphan child will make it none the less likely to hold out."

"There'll always be a handful of meal in the barrel and a little oil in the cruse for you, I'm sure," said my grandmother; "the word of the Lord stands sure for that."

A sad shadow fell over Miss Mehitable's face at these words, and then the usual expression of quaint humour stole over it. "It's to be hoped that Polly will take the same view of the subject that you appear to," said she. "My authority over Polly is, you know, of an extremely nominal kind."

"Still," said my grandmother, "you must be mistress in your own house. Polly, I am sure, knows her duty to you."

"Polly's idea of allegiance is very much like that of the old Spanish nobles to their king; it used to run somewhat thus: 'We, who are every way as good as you are, promise obedience to your government if you maintain our rights and liberties, but if not, not.' Now Polly's ideas of 'rights and liberties' are of a very set and particular nature, and I have found her generally disposed to make a good fight for them. Still, after all," she added, "the poor old thing loves me, and I think will be willing to indulge me in having a doll, if I really am set upon it. The only way I can carry my point with Polly is to come down on her with a perfect avalanche of certainty, and so I have passed my word to you that I will be responsible for this child. Polly may scold and fret for a fortnight; but she is too good a Puritan to question whether people shall keep their promises. Polly abhors covenant-breaking with all her soul, and so in the end she will have to help me through."

"It's a pretty child," said my grandmother, "and an engaging one, and Polly may come to liking her."

"There's no saying," said Miss Mehitable. "You never know what you may find in the odd corners of an old maid's heart, when you fairly look into them. There are often unused hoards of maternal affection enough to set up an orphan-asylum; but it's like iron filings and a magnet,—you must try them with a live child, and if there is anything in 'em, you find it out. That little object," she said, looking

over her shoulder at Tina, "made an instant commotion in the dust and rubbish of my forlorn old garret, and brought to light a deal that I thought had gone to the moles and the bats long ago. She will do me good, I can feel, with her little pertnesses and her airs and fancies. If you could know how chilly and lonesome an old house gets sometimes, particularly in autumn, when the equinoctial storm is brewing! A lively child is a godsend, even if she turns the whole house topsy-turvy."

"Well, a child can't always be a plaything," said Aunt Lois; "it's a solemn and awful responsibility."

"And if I don't take it, who will?" said Miss Mehitable, gravely. "If a better one would, I wouldn't. I've no great confidence in myself. I profess no skill in human cobbling. I can only give house-room and shelter and love, and let come what will come. 'A man cannot escape what is written on his forehead,' the Turkish proverb says, and this poor child's history is all forewritten."

"The Lord will bless you for your goodness to the orphan," said my grandmother.

"I don't know about its being goodness. I take a fancy to her. I hunger for the child. There's no merit in wanting your bit of cake, and maybe taking it when it isn't good for you; but let's hope all's well that ends well. Since I have fairly claimed her for mine, I begin to feel a fierce right of property in her, and you'd see me fighting like an old hen with anybody that should try to get her away from me. You'll see me made an old fool of by her smart little ways and speeches; and I already am proud of her beauty. Did you ever see a brighter little minx?"

We looked across to the other end of the fireplace, where Miss Tina sat perched, with great contentment, on Sam Lawson's knee, listening with wide-open eyes to the accounts

he was giving of the haunted house. The beautiful hair that Miss Asphyxia had cut so close had grown with each day, till now it stood up in half rings of reddish gold, through which the fire shone with a dancing light; and her great eyes seemed to radiate brightness from as many points as a diamond.

"Depend upon it, those children are of good blood," said Miss Mehitable, decisively. "You'll never make me believe that they will not be found to belong in some way to some reputable stock."

"Well, we know nothing about their parents," said my grandmother, "except what we heard second-hand through Sam Lawson. It was a wandering woman, sick and a stranger, who was taken down and died in Old Crab Smith's house, over in Needmore."

"One can tell, by the child's manner of speaking, that she has been brought up among educated people," said Miss Mehitable. "She is no little rustic. The boy, too, looks of the fine clay of the earth. But it's time for me to take little Miss Rattlebrain home with me, and get her into bed. Sleep is a gracious state for children, and the first step in my new duties is a plain one." So saying, Miss Mehitable rose, and, stepping over to the other side of the fireplace, tapped Tina lightly on the shoulder. "Come, pussy," she said, "get your bonnet, and we will go home."

Harry, who had watched all the movements between Miss Mehitable and his sister with intense interest, now stepped forward, blushing very much, but still with a quaint little old-fashioned air of manliness. "Is my sister going to live with you?"

"So we have agreed, my little man," said Miss Mehitable. "I hope you have no objection?"

"Will you let me come and see her sometimes?"

"Certainly; you will always be quite welcome."

"I want to see her sometimes, because my mother left her under my care. I shan't have a great deal of time to come in the daytime, because I must work for my living," he said, "but a little while sometime at night, if you would let me."

"And what do you work at?" said Miss Mehitable, surveying the delicate boy with an air of some amusement.

"I used to pick up potatoes, and fodder the cattle, and do a great many things; and I am growing stronger every day, and by and by can do a great deal more."

"Well said, sonny," said my grandfather, laying his hand on his head. "You speak like a smart boy. We can have you down to help tend sawmill."

"I wonder how many more boys will be wanted to help tend sawmill," said Aunt Lois.

"Well, good night all," said Miss Mehitable, starting to go home.

Tina, however, stopped and left her side, and threw her arms round Harry's neck and kissed him. "Good-night now. You'll come and see me to-morrow," she said.

"May I come too?" I said, almost before I thought.

"Oh, certainly, do come," said Tina, with that warm, earnest light in her eyes which seemed the very soul of hospitality. "*She'll* like to have you, I know."

"The child is taking possession of the situation at once," said Miss Mehitable. "Well, Brighteyes, you may come too," she added to me. "A precious row there will be among the old books when you all get together there;"—and Miss Mehitable, with the gay, tripping figure by her side, left the room.

"Is this great, big, dark house yours?" said the child, as they came under the shadow of a dense thicket of syringas and lilacs that overhung the front of the house.



"Yes, this is Doubting Castle," said Miss Mehitable.

"And does Giant Despair live here?" said Tina. "Mamma showed me a picture of him once in a book."

"Well, he has tried many times to take possession," said Miss Mehitable, "but I do what I can to keep him out, and you must help me."

Saying this, she opened the door of a large, old-fashioned room, that appeared to have served both the purposes of a study and parlour. It was revealed to view by the dusky, uncertain glimmer of a wood fire that had burnt almost down on a pair of tall brass andirons. The sides of the room were filled to the ceiling with book-cases full of books. Some dark portraits of men and women were duskily revealed by the flickering light, as well as a wide, ample-bosomed chintz-covered easy-chair. A table draped with a green cloth stood in a corner by the fire, strewn over with books and writing-materials, and sustaining a large work-basket.

"How dark it is!" said the child.

Miss Mehitable took a burning splinter of the wood, and lighted a candle in a tall, plated candlestick, that stood on the high, narrow mantel-piece over the fireplace. At this moment a side-door opened, and a large-boned woman, dressed in a home-spun stuff petticoat, with a short, loose sack of the same material, appeared at the door. Her face was freckled; her hair, of a caroty-yellow, was plastered closely to her head and secured by a horn comb; her eyes were so sharp and searching, that, as she fixed them on Tina, she blinked involuntarily. Around her neck she wore a large string of gold beads, the brilliant gleam of which, catching the firelight, revealed itself at once to Tina's eye, and caused her to regard the woman with curiosity.

She appeared to have opened the door with an intention of asking a question; but stopped and surveyed the child with

a sharp expression of not very well-pleased astonishment. "I thought you spoke to me," she said, at last, to Miss Mehitable.

"You may warm my bed now, Polly," said Miss Mehitable; "I shall be ready to go up in a few moments."

Polly stood a moment more, as if awaiting some communication about the child; but as Miss Mehitable turned away, and appeared to be busying herself about the fire, Polly gave a sudden windy dart from the room, and closed the door with a bang that made the window-casings rattle.

"Why, what did she do that for?" said Tina.

"Oh, it's Polly's way; she does everything with all her might," said Miss Mehitable.

"Don't she like *me*?" said the child.

"Probably not. She knows nothing about you, and she does not like new things."

"But won't she *ever* like me?" persisted Tina.

"*That*, my dear, will depend in a great degree on yourself. If she sees that you are good and behave well, she will probably end by liking you; but old people like her are afraid that children will meddle with their things, and get them out of place."

"I mean to be good," said Tina, resolutely. "When I lived with Miss Asphyxia, I wanted to be bad, I tried to be bad; but now I am changed. I mean to be good, because you are good to me," and the child laid her head confidently in Miss Mehitable's lap.

The dearest of all flattery to the old and uncomely is this caressing, confiding love of childhood, and Miss Mehitable felt a glow of pleasure about her dusky old heart at which she really wondered. "Can anything so fair really love *me*?" she asked herself. Alas! how much of this cheap-bought happiness goes to waste daily! While unclaimed children

grow up loveless, men and women wither in lonely, craving solitude.

Polly again appeared at the door. "Your bed's all warm, and you'd better go right up, else what's the use of warming it?"

"Yes, I'll come immediately," said Miss Mehitable, endeavouring steadfastly to look as if she did not see Polly's looks, and to act as if there had of course always been a little girl to sleep with her.

"Come, my little one." *My* little one! Miss Mehitable's heart gave a great throb at this possessive pronoun. It all seemed as strange to her as a dream. A few hours ago, and she sat in the old windy, lonesome house, alone with the memories of dead friends, and feeling herself walking to the grave in a dismal solitude. Suddenly she awoke as from a dark dream, and found herself sole possessor of beauty, youth, and love, in a glowing little form, all her own, with no mortal to dispute it. She had a mother's right in a child. She might have a daughter's love. The whole house seemed changed. The dreary, lonesome great hall, with its tall, solemn-ticking clock, the wide, echoing staircase, up which Miss Mehitable had crept, shivering and alone, so many sad nights, now gave back the chirpings of Tina's rattling gaiety and the silvery echoes of her laugh, as, happy in her new lot, she danced up the stairway, stopping to ask eager questions on this and that, as anything struck her fancy. For Miss Tina had one of those buoyant, believing natures, born to ride always on the very top crest of every wave,—one fully disposed to accept of good fortune in all its length and breadth, and to make the most of it at once.

"This is *our* home," she said, "isn't it?"

"Yes, darling," said Miss Mehitable, catching her in her

arms fondly; "it is *our* home; we will have good times here together."

Tina threw her arms around Miss Mehitable's neck and kissed her. "I'm so glad! Harry said that God would find us a home as soon as it was best, and now here it comes."

Miss Mehitable set the child down by the side of a great dark wooden bedstead, with tall, carved posts, draped with curious curtains of India linen, where strange Oriental plants and birds, and quaint pagodas and figures in turbans, were all mingled together, like the phantasms in a dream. Then going to a tall chest of drawers, resplendent with many brass handles, which reached almost to the ceiling, she took a bunch of keys from her pocket and unlocked a drawer. A spasm as of pain passed over her face as she opened it, and her hands trembled with some suppressed emotion as she took up and laid down various articles, searching for something. At last she found what she wanted, and shook it out. It was a child's night-gown, of just the size needed by Tina. It was yellow with age, but made with dainty care. She sat down by the child and began a movement towards undressing her.

"Shall I say my prayers to you," said Tina, "before I go to bed?"

"Certainly," said Miss Mehitable; "by all means."

"They are rather long," said the child, apologetically,— "that is, if I say all that Harry does. Harry said mamma wanted us to say them all every night. It takes some time."

"Oh, by all means say all," said Miss Mehitable.

Tina knelt down by her and put her hands in hers, and said the Lord's Prayer, and the psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd." She had a natural turn for elocution, this little

one, and spoke her words with a grace and an apparent understanding not ordinary in childhood.

"There's a hymn, besides," she said. "It belongs to the prayer."

"Well, let us have that," said Miss Mehitable.

Tina repeated,—

"One there is above all others  
Well deserves the name of Friend:  
His is love beyond a brother's,  
Costly, free, and knows no end."

She had an earnest, half-heroic way of repeating, and as she gazed into her listener's eyes, she perceived, by subtle instinct, that what she was saying affected her deeply. She stopped, wondering.

"Go on, my love," said Miss Mehitable.

Tina continued, with enthusiasm, feeling that she was making an impression on her auditor:—

"Which of all our friends, to save us,  
Could or would have shed his blood?  
But the Saviour died to have us  
Reconciled in him to God.

"When He lived on earth abased,  
Friend of Sinners was His name;  
Now, above all glory raised,  
He rejoiceth in the same."

"O my child, where did you learn that hymn?" said Miss Mehitable, to whom the words were new. Simple and homely as they were, they had struck on some inner nerve, which was vibrating with intense feeling. Tears were standing in her eyes.

"It was mamma's hymn," said Tina. "She always used to say it. There is one more verse," she added.

"Oh for grace our hearts to soften!  
Teach us, Lord, at length to love;  
We, alas! forget too often  
What a Friend we have above."

"Is that the secret of all earthly sorrow, then?" said Miss Mehitable aloud, in involuntary soliloquy. The sound of her own voice seemed to startle her. She sighed deeply, and kissed the child. "Thank you, my darling. It does me good to hear you," she said.

The child had entered so earnestly, so passionately even, into the spirit of the words she had been repeating, that she seemed to Miss Mehitable to be transfigured into an angel messenger, sent to inspire faith in God's love in a darkened, despairing soul. She put her into bed; but Tina immediately asserted her claim to an earthly nature by stretching herself exultingly in the warm bed, with an exclamation of vivid pleasure.

"How different this seems from my cold old bed at Miss Asphyxia's!" she said. "Oh, that horrid woman! how I hate her!" she added, with a scowl and a frown, which made the angelhood of the child more than questionable.

Miss Mehitable's vision melted. It was not a child of heaven, but a little mortal sinner, that she was tucking up for the night; and she felt constrained to essay her first effort at moral training.

"My dear," she said; "did you not say, to-night, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'? Do you know what that means?"

"O yes," said Tina, readily.

"Well, if your heavenly Father should forgive your sins just as you forgive Miss Asphyxia, how would you like that?"

There was a silence. The large bright eyes grew round and reflective, as they peered out from between the sheets and the pillow. At last she said in a modified voice: "Well, I won't hate her any more. But," she added, with increased vivacity, "I may think she's hateful, mayn't I?"

Is there ever a hard question in morals that children do not drive straight at, in their wide-eyed questioning?

Miss Mehitable felt inclined to laugh, but said gravely: "I wouldn't advise you to think evil about her. Perhaps she is a poor woman that never had any one to love her, or anything to love, and it has made her hard."

Tina looked at Miss Mehitable earnestly, as if she were pondering the remark. "She told me that she was put to work younger than I was," she said, "and kept at it all the time."

"And perhaps, if you had been kept at work all your life in that hard way, you would have grown up to be just like her."

"Well, then, I'm sorry for her," said Tina. "There's nobody loves her, that's a fact. Nobody can love her, unless it's God. He loves every one, Harry says."

"Well, good night, my darling," said Miss Mehitable, kissing her. "I shall come to bed pretty soon. I will leave you a candle," she added; "because this is a strange place."

"How good you are!" said Tina. "I used to be so afraid in the dark, at Miss Asphyxia's; and I was so wicked all day, that I was afraid of God too, at night. I used sometimes to think I heard something chewing under my bed; and I thought it was a wolf, and would eat me up."

"Poor little darling!" said Miss Mehitable. "Would you rather I sat by you till you went to sleep?"

"No, thank you; I don't like to trouble you," said the child. "If you leave a candle I shan't be afraid. And, besides, I've said my prayers now. I didn't use to say them one bit at Miss Asphyxia's. She would tell me to say my prayers, and then bang the door so hard, and I would feel cross, and think I wouldn't. But I am better now, because you love me."



Miss Mehitable returned to the parlour, and sat down to ponder over her fire; and the result of her ponderings shall be given in a letter which she immediately began writing at the green-covered table.

## CHAPTER XIX.

Miss Mehitable's Letter, and the Reply, giving further Hints of the Story.

“MY DEAR BROTHER,—Since I wrote you last, so strange a change has taken place in my life that even now I walk about as in a dream, and hardly know myself. The events of a few hours have made everything in the world seem to me as different from what it ever seemed before as death is from life.

“Not to keep you waiting, after so solemn a preface, I will announce to you first, briefly, what it is, and then, secondly, how it happened.

“Well, then, *I have adopted a child*, in my dry and wilted old age. She is a beautiful and engaging little creature, full of life and spirits,—full of warm affections,—thrown an absolute waif and stray on the sands of life. Her mother was an unknown Englishwoman,—probably some relict of the retired English army. She died in great destitution, in the neighbouring town of Needmore, leaving on the world two singularly interesting children, a boy and a girl. They were, of course, taken in charge by the parish, and fell to the lot of old Crab Smith and his sister, Miss Asphyxia, just think of it! I think I need say no more than this about their lot.

“In a short time they ran away from cruel treatment; lived in a desolate little housekeeping way in the old Dench house; till finally Sam Lawson, lounging about in his general and universal way, picked them up. He brought them, of course,

where every wandering, distressed thing comes,—to Deacon Badger's.

“Now I suppose the deacon is comfortably off in the world, as our New England farmers go, but his ability to maintain general charges of housekeeping for all mankind may seriously be doubted. Lois Badger, who does the work of Martha in that establishment, came over to me, yesterday afternoon, quite distressed in her mind about it. Lois is a worthy creature,—rather sharp, to be sure, but, when her edge is turned the right way, none the worse for that,—and really I thought she had the right of it, to some extent.

“People in general are so resigned to have other folks made burnt sacrifices, that it did not appear to me probable that there was a creature in Oldtown who would do anything more than rejoice that Deacon Badger felt able to take the children. After I had made some rather bitter reflections on the world, and its selfishness, in the style that we all practise, the thought suddenly occurred to me, What do you more than others? and that idea, together with the beauty and charms of the poor little waif, decided me to take this bold step. I shut my eyes, and took it,—not without quaking in my shoes for fear of Polly; but I have carried my point in her very face, without so much as saying by your leave.

“The little one has just been taken up-stairs and tucked up warmly in my own bed, with one of our poor little Emily's old nightgowns on. They fit her exactly, and I exult over her as one that findeth great spoil.

“Polly has not yet declared herself, except by slamming the door very hard when she first made the discovery of the child's presence in the house. I presume there is an equinoctial gale gathering, but I say nothing; for, after all, Polly is a good creature, and will blow herself round into the right

quarter, in time, as our north-east rain-storms generally do. People always accommodate themselves to certainties.

“I cannot but regard the coming of this child to me at this time as a messenger of mercy from God, to save me from sinking into utter despair. I have been so lonely, so miserable, so utterly, inexpressibly wretched of late, that it has seemed that, if something did not happen to help me, I must lose my reason. Our family disposition to melancholy is a hard enough thing to manage under the most prosperous circumstances. I remember my father's paroxysms of gloom: they used to frighten me when I was a little girl, and laid a heavy burden on the heart of our dear angel mother. Whatever that curse is, we all inherit it. In the heart of every one of us children there is that fearful *black drop*, like that which the Koran says the angel showed to Mohammed. It is an inexplicable something which always predisposes us to sadness, but in which any real, appreciable sorrow strikes a terribly deep and long root. Shakspeare describes this thing, as he does everything else:

‘In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:  
It wearies me,—you say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn.’

You have struggled with it by the most rational means,—an active out-of-door life, by sea voyages and severe manual labour. A *man* can fight this dragon as a woman cannot. We women are helpless,—tied to places, forms, and rules,—chained to our stake. We must meet him as we can.

“Of late I have not been able to sleep, and, lying awake all night long in darkness and misery, have asked, if *this* be life, whether an immortal existence is not a curse to be feared, rather than a blessing to be hoped, and if the wretchedness

we fear in the eternal world can be worse than what we sometimes suffer now,—such sinking of heart, such helplessness of fear, such a vain calling for help that never comes. Well, I will not live it over again, for I dare say you know it all too well. I think I finally wore myself out in trying to cheer poor brother Theodore's darksome way down to death. Can you wonder that he would take opium? God alone can judge people that suffer as he did, and, let people say what they please, I must, I will, think that God has some pity for the work of His hands.

“Now, brother, I must, I will, write to you about Emily; though you have said you never wished to hear her name again. What right had you, her brother, to give her up so, and to let the whole burden of this dreadful mystery and sorrow come down on me alone? You are not certain that she has gone astray in the worst sense that a woman can. We only know that she has broken away from us and gone,—but where, how, and with whom, you cannot say, nor I. And certainly there was great excuse for her. Consider how the peculiar temperament and constitution of our family wrought upon her. Consider the temptations of her wonderful beauty, her highly nervous, wildly excitable organisation. Her genius was extraordinary; her strength and vigour of character quite as much so. Altogether, she was a perilously constituted human being,—and what did we do with her? A good, common girl might have been put with Uncle and Aunt Farnsworth with great advantage. We put her there for the simple reason that they were her aunt and uncle, and had money enough to educate her. But in all other respects they were about the most unsuited that could be conceived. I must say that I think that glacial, gloomy, religious training in Uncle Farnsworth's family was, for her, peculiarly unfortunate. She sat from Sunday to Sunday under Dr. Stern's

preaching. With a high-keyed, acute mind, she could not help listening and thinking; and such thinking is unfortunate, to say the least.

“It always seemed to me that he was one of those who experiment on the immortal soul as daring doctors experiment on the body,—using the most violent and terrible remedies,—remedies that must kill or cure. His theory was, that a secret enemy to God was lying latent in every soul, which, like some virulent poisons in the body, could only be expelled by being brought to the surface; and he had sermon after sermon, whose only object appeared to be to bring into vivid consciousness what he calls the natural opposition of the human heart.

“But, alas! in some cases the enmity thus aroused can never be subdued; and Emily's was a nature that would break before it would bow. Nothing could have subdued her but love,—and love she never heard. These appalling doctrines were presented with such logical clearness, and apparently so established from the Scriptures, that, unable to distinguish between the word of God and the cruel deductions of human logic, she trod both under foot in defiant despair. Then came in the French literature, which is so fascinating, and which just now is having so wide an influence on the thinking of our country. Rousseau and Voltaire charmed her, and took her into a new world. She has probably gone to France for liberty, with no protection but her own virgin nature. Are we at once to infer the worst, when we know so little? I, for one, shall love her and trust in her to the end; and if ever she should fall, and do things that I and all the world must condemn, I shall still say, that it will be less her fault than that of others; that she will be one of those who fall by their higher, rather than their lower nature.

“I have a prophetic instinct in my heart that some day,

poor, forlorn, and forsaken, she will look back with regret to the old house where she was born: and then she shall be welcome here. This is why I keep this solitary old place, full of bitter and ghostly memories; because, as long as I keep it, there is one refuge that Emily may call her own, and one heart that will be true to her, and love her and believe in her to the end.

“I think God has been merciful to me in sending me this child, to be to me as a daughter. Already her coming has been made a means of working in me that great moral change for which all my life I have been blindly seeking. I have sought that *conversion* which our father taught us to expect as alchemists seek the philosopher’s stone.

“What have I not read and suffered at the hands of the theologians? How many lonely hours, day after day, have I bent the knee in fruitless prayer that God would grant me this great, unknown grace! for without it how dreary is life!

“We are in ourselves so utterly helpless,—life is so hard, so inexplicable, that we stand in perishing need of some helping hand, some sensible, appreciable connexion with God. And yet for years every cry of misery, every breath of anguish, has been choked by the logical proofs of theology;—that God is my enemy, or that I am His; that every effort I make toward Him but aggravates my offence; and that this unknown gift, which no child of Adam ever did compass of himself, is so completely in my own power, that I am every minute of my life to blame for not possessing it.

“How many hours have I gone round and round this dreary track,—chilled, weary, shivering, seeing no light, and hearing no voice! But within this last hour it seems as if a divine ray had shone upon me, and the great gift had been given me by the hand of a little child. It came in the simplest and most unexpected manner, while listening to a very homely



hymn, repeated by this dear little one. The words themselves were not much in the way of poetry; it was merely the simplest statement of the truth that in Jesus Christ, ever living, ever present, every human soul has a personal friend, divine and almighty.

"This thought came over me with such power, that it seemed as if all my doubts, all my intricate, contradictory theologies, all those personal and family sorrows which had made a burden on my soul greater than poor Christian ever staggered under, had gone where his did, when, at the sight of the Cross, it loosed from his back, and rolled down into the sepulchre, to be seen no more. Can it be, I asked myself, that this mighty love, that I feel so powerfully and so sweetly, has been near me all these dark, melancholy years? Has the sun been shining behind all these heavy clouds, under whose shadows I have spent my life?

"When I laid my little Tina down to sleep to-night, I came down here to think over this strange, new thought,—that I, even I, in my joyless old age, my poverty, my perplexities, my loneliness, am no longer alone! I am beloved. There is One who does love me,—the One Friend, whose love, like the sunshine, can be the portion of each individual of the human race, without exhaustion. This is the great mystery of faith, which I am determined from this hour to keep whole and undefiled.

"My dear brother, I have never before addressed to you a word on this subject. It has been one in which I saw only perplexity. I have, it is true, been grieved and disappointed that you did not see your way clear to embrace the sacred ministry, which has for so many generations been the appointed work of our family. I confess for many years I did hope to see you succeed, not only to the library, but to the work, of our honoured, venerated father and grandfather. It



was my hope that, in this position, I should find in you a spiritual guide to resolve my doubts and lead me aright. But I have gathered from you at times, by chance words dropped, that you could not exactly accept the faith of our fathers. Perhaps difficulties like my own have withheld you. I know you too well to believe that the French scepticism that has blown over here with the breath of our political revolution can have had the least influence over you. Whatever your views of doctrines may be, you are not a doubter. You are not—as poor Emily defiantly called herself—a deist, an alien from all that our fathers came to this wilderness to maintain. Yet when I see you burying your talents in a lonely mountain village, satisfied with the work of a poor schoolmaster, instead of standing forth to lead our New England in the pulpit, I ask myself, Why is this?

“Speak to me, brother! tell me your innermost thoughts, as I have told you mine. Is not life short and sad and bitter enough, that those who could help each other should neglect the few things they can do to make it tolerable? Why do we travel side by side, lonely and silent,—each, perhaps, hiding in that silence the bread of life that the other needs? Write to me as I have written to you, and let me know that I have a brother in soul, as I have in flesh.—Your affectionate sister,  
“M. R.”

“MY DEAR SISTER,—I have read your letter. Answer it justly and truly, how can I? How little we know of each other in outside intimacy! but when we put our key into the door of the secret chamber, who does not tremble and draw back?—*that* is the true haunted chamber!

“First, about Emily, I will own I am wrong. It is from no want of love, though, but from too much. I was and am too sore and bitter on that subject to trust myself. I have a

heart full of curses, but don't know exactly where to fling them; and, for aught I see, we are utterly helpless. Every clue fails; and what is the use of torturing ourselves? It is a man's nature to act, to do, and where nothing can be done, to forget. It is a woman's nature to hold on to what can only torture, and live all her despairs over. Women's tears are their meat; men find the diet too salt, and won't take it.

"Tell me anything I can *do*, and I'll do it; but talk I cannot,—every word burns me. I admit every word you say of Emily. We were mistaken in letting her go to the Farnsworths, and be baited and tortured with ultra-Calvinism; but we were blind, as we mortals always are,—fated never to see what we should have done, till seeing is too late.

"I am glad you have taken that child,—first, because it's a good deed in itself, and, secondly, because it's good for you. That it should have shed light on your relations to God is strictly philosophical. You have been trying to find your way to Him by definitions and by logic; one might as well make love to a lady by the first book of Euclid. 'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' That throb of protecting, all-embracing love which thrilled through your heart for this child taught you more of God than father's whole library. 'He that loveth not knoweth not God.' The old Bible is philosophical, and eminent for its common sense. Of course this child will make a fool of you. Never mind; the follies of love are remedial.

"As to a system of education, it will be an amusement for you to get that up. Every human being likes to undertake to dictate for some other one. Go at it with good cheer. But whatever you do, don't teach her *French*. Give her a good Saxon-English education; and, if she needs a pasture-land of foreign languages, let her learn Latin, and, more than that,

Greek. Greek is the morning-land of languages, and has the freshness of early dew in it which will never exhale.

“The French helped us in our late war; for that I thank them; but from French philosophy and French democracy, may the good Lord deliver us. They slew their Puritans in the massacre of St. Bartholmew, and the nation ever since has been without a moral sense. French literature is like an eagle with one broken wing. What the Puritans did for us English people, in bringing in civil liberty, they lacked. Our revolutions have been gradual. I predict that theirs will come by and by with an explosion.

“Meanwhile, our young men who follow after French literature become rakes and profligates. Their first step in liberty is to repeal the ten commandments, especially the seventh. Therefore I consider a young woman in our day misses nothing who does not read French. Decorous French literature is stupid, and bright French literature is too wicked for anything. So let French alone.

“She threatens to be pretty, does she? So much the worse for you and her. If she makes you too much trouble by and by, send her up to my academy, and I will drill her, and make a Spartan of her.

“As to what you say about religion, and the ministry, and the schoolmaster, what can I say on this sheet of paper? Briefly then. No, I am *not* in any sense an unbeliever in the old Bible; I would as soon disbelieve my own mother. And I am in my nature a thorough Puritan. I am a Puritan as thoroughly as a hound is a hound, and a pointer a pointer, whose pedigree of unmixed blood can be traced for generations back. I feel within me the preaching instinct, just as the hound snuffs, and the pointer points; but as to the pulpit in these days, well, thereby hangs a tale.

“What should I preach, supposing I were a minister, as

my father, and grandfather, and great-grandfather were before me? What they preached was true to them, was fitted for their times, was loyally and sincerely said, and of course did a world of good. But when I look over their sermons, I put an interrogation point to almost everything they say; and what was true to them is not true to me; and if I should speak out as honestly as they did what *is* true to me, the world would not understand or receive it, and I think it would do more harm than good. I believe I am thinking ahead of the present generation, and if I should undertake to push my thoughts, I should only bother people, just as one of my bright boys in the latter part of the algebra sometimes worries a new beginner with his advanced explanations.

“Then again, our late Revolution has wrought a change in the ministry that will soon become more and more apparent. The time when ministers were noblemen by divine right, and reigned over their parishes by the cocked-hat and gold-headed cane, is passing away. Dr. Lothrop, and Dr. Stern, and a few others, keep up the prestige, but that sort of thing is going by; and in the next generation the minister will be nothing but a citizen; his words will come without prestige, and be examined and sifted just like the words of any other citizen.

“There is a race of ministers rising up who are fully adequate to meet this exigency; and these men are going to throw Calvinism down into the arena, and discuss every inch of it, hand to hand and knee to knee, with the common people; and we shall see what will come of this.

“I, for my part, am not prepared to be a minister on these terms. Still, as I said, I have the born instinct of preaching. I am dictatorial by nature, and one of those who need constantly to see themselves reflected in other people's eyes: and so I have got an academy here, up in the mountains,

where I have a set of as clear, bright-eyed, bright-minded boys and girls as you would wish to see, and am in my way a pope. Well, I enjoy being a pope. It is one of my weaknesses.

“As to society, we have the doctor,—a quiet little wrinkled old man, a profound disbeliever in medicines, who gives cream-of-tartar for ordinary cases, and camomile tea when the symptoms become desperate, and reads Greek for his own private amusement. Of course he doesn't get very rich, but here in the mountains one can afford to be poor. One of our sunsets is worth half a Boston doctor's income.

“Then there's the lawyer and squire, who draws the deeds, and makes the wills, and settles the quarrels; and the minister, who belongs to the new dispensation. He and I are sworn friends; he is my *Fidus Achates*. His garden joins mine, and when I am hoeing my corn he is hoeing his, and thence comes talk. As it gets more eager I jump the fence and hoe in his garden, or he does the same to mine. We have a strife on the matter of garden craft, who shall with most skill outwit our Mother Nature, and get cantelopes and melons under circumstances in which she never intended them to grow. This year I beat the parson, but I can see that he is secretly resolved to revenge himself on me when the sweet corn comes in. One evening every week we devote to reading the newspaper and settling the affairs of the country. We are both staunch Federalists, and make the walls ring with our denunciations of Jacobinism and Democracy. Once a month we have the *Columbian Magazine* and the foreign news from Europe, and then we have a great deal on our hands; we go over affairs, every country systematically, and settle them for the month. In general we are pretty well agreed, but now and then our lines of policy differ, and then we fight it out with good courage, not sparing the adjectives. The parson

has a sly humour of his own, and our noisiest discussions generally end in a hearty laugh.

“So much for the man and friend,—now for the clergyman. He is neither the sentimental, good parson of Goldsmith, nor the plaintive, ascetic parish priest of Romanism, nor the cocked-hat of the theocracy, but a lively, acute, full-blooded *man*, who does his duty on equal terms among men. He is as single-hearted as an unblemished crystal, and in some matters sacredly simple; but yet not without a thrifty practical shrewdness, both in things temporal and things spiritual. He has an income of about two hundred and fifty dollars, with his wood. The farmers about here consider him as rolling in wealth, and I must say that, though the parsonage is absolutely bare of luxuries, one is not there often unpleasantly reminded that the parson is a poor man. He has that golden faculty of enjoying the work he does so utterly, and believing in it so entirely, that he can quite afford to be poor. He whose daily work is in itself a pleasure ought not to ask for riches: so I tell myself about my school-keeping, and him about his parish. He takes up the conversion of sinners as an immediate practical business, to be done and done now; he preaches in all the little hills and dales and hollows and brown school-houses for miles around, and chases his sinners up and down so zealously, that they have, on the whole, a lively time of it. He attacks drinking and all our small forms of country immorality with a vigour sufficient to demolish sins of double their size, and gives nobody even a chance to sleep in meeting. The good farmers around here, some of whom would like to serve Mammon comfortably, are rather in a quandary what to do. They never would bear the constant hounding which he gives them, and the cannonades he fires at their pet sins, and the way he chases them from pillar to post, and the merciless manner in which he breaks



in upon their comfortable old habit of sleeping in meeting, were it not that they feel that they are paying him an enormous salary, and ought to get their money's worth out of him, which they are certain they are doing most fully. Your Yankee has such a sense of values, that, if he pays a man to thrash him, he wants to be thrashed thoroughly.

"My good friend preaches what they call New Divinity, by which I understand the Calvinism which our fathers left us, in the commencing process of disintegration. He is thoroughly and enthusiastically in earnest about it, and believes that the system, as far as Edwards and Hopkins have got it, is almost absolute truth; but, for all that, is cheerfully busy in making some little emendations and corrections, upon which he values himself, and which he thinks of the greatest consequence. What is to the credit of his heart is, that these emendations are generally in favour of some original-minded sheep who can't be got into the sheepfold without some alteration in the paling. In these cases I have generally noticed that he will loosen a rail or tear off a picket, and let the sheep in, it being his impression, after all, that the sheep are worth more than the sheepfold.

"In his zeal to catch certain shy sinners, he has more than once preached sermons which his brethren about here find fault with, as wandering from old standards; and it costs abundance of bustle and ingenuity to arrange his system so as to provide for exceptional cases, and yet to leave it exactly what it was before the alterations were made.

"It is, I believe, an admitted thing among theologians, that, while theology must go on improving from age to age, it must also remain exactly what it was a hundred years ago.

"The parson is my intimate friend, and it is easy for me to see that he has designs for the good of my soul, for which



I sincerely love him. I can see that he is lying in wait for me patiently, as sometimes we do for trout, when we go out fishing together. He reconnoitres me, approaches me carefully, makes nice little logical traps to catch me in, and baits them with very innocent-looking questions, which I, being an old theological rat, skilfully avoid answering.

“My friend's forte is logic. Between you and me, if there is a golden calf worshipped in our sanctified New England, its name is *Logic*; and my good friend the parson burns incense before it with a most sacred innocence of intention. He believes that sinners can be converted by logic, and that, if he could once get me into one of these neat little traps aforesaid, the salvation of my soul would be assured. He has caught numbers of the shrewdest infidel foxes among the farmers around, and I must say that there is no trap for the Yankee like the logic trap.

“I must tell you a story about this which amused me greatly. You know everybody's religious opinions are a matter of discussion in our neighbourhood, and Ezekiel Scranton, a rich farmer who lives up on the hill, enjoys the celebrity of being an atheist, and rather values himself on the distinction. It takes a man of courage, you know, to live without a God; and Ezekiel gives himself out as a plucky dog, and able to hold the parson at bay. The parson, however, had privately prepared a string of questions which he was quite sure would drive Ezekiel into strait quarters. So he meets him the other day in the store.

“‘How's this, Mr. Scranton? they tell me that you're an atheist!’

“‘Well, I guess I be, Parson,’ says Ezekiel, comfortably.

“‘Well, Ezekiel, let's talk about this. You believe in your own existence, don't you?’

“‘No, I don’t.’

“‘What! not believe in your own existence?’

“‘No, I don’t.’ Then, after a moment, ‘Tell you what, Parson, ain’t a-going to be twitched up by none o’ your syllogisms.’

“Ezekiel was quite in the right of it; for I must do my friend the parson the justice to say, that, if you answer one of his simple-looking questions, you are gone. You must say B after saying A, and the whole alphabet after that.

“For my part, I do not greatly misbelieve the main points of Calvinism. They strike me, as most hard and disagreeable things do, as quite likely to be true, and very much in accordance with a sensible man’s observation of facts as they stand in life and nature. My doubts come up, like bats, from a dark and dreadful cavern that underlies all religion, natural or revealed. They are of a class abhorrent to myself, smothering to my peace, imbittering to my life.

“What must he be who is tempted to deny the very right of his Creator to the allegiance of His creatures?—who is tempted to feel that his own conscious existence is an inflicted curse, and that the whole race of men have been a set of neglected, suffering children, bred like fish-spawn on a thousand shores, by a Being who has never interested himself to care for their welfare, to prevent their degradation, to interfere with their cruelties to each other, as they have writhed and wrangled into life, through life, and out of life again? Does this look like being a Father in any sense in which we poor mortals think of fatherhood? After seeing nature, can we reason against any of the harshest conclusions of Calvinism from the character of its Author.

“Do we not consider a man unworthy the name of a good father who, from mere blind reproductive instinct, gives birth

to children for whose improvement, virtue, and happiness he makes no provision? and yet does not this seem to be the way more than half of the human race actually comes into existence?

“Then the laws of nature are an inextricable labyrinth,—puzzling, crossing, contradictory; and ages of wearisome study have as yet hardly made a portion of them clear enough for human comfort; and doctors and ministers go on torturing the body and the soul, with the most devout good intentions. And so forth, for there is no end to this sort of talk.

“Now my friend the parson is the outgrowth of the New England theocracy, about the simplest, purest, and least objectionable state of society that the world ever saw. He has a good digestion, a healthy mind in a healthy body; he lives in a village where there is no pauperism and hardly any crime,—where all the embarrassing, dreadful social problems and mysteries of life scarcely exist. But I, who have been tumbled up and down upon all the shores of earth, lived in India, China, and Polynesia, and seen the human race as they breed like vermin, in their filth and their contented degradation,—how can I think of applying the measurements of any theological system to a reality like this?

“Now the parts of their system on which my dear friend the parson, and those of his school, specially value themselves, are their explanations of the reasons why evil was permitted, and their vindications of the Divine character in view of it. They are specially earnest and alert in giving out their views here, and the parson has read to me more than one sermon, hoping to medicate what he supposes to be my secret wound. To me their various theories are, as my friend the doctor once said to me, ‘putting their bitter pill in

a chestnut-burr; the pill is bad,—there is no help for that,—but the chestnut-burr is impossible.'

"It is incredible, the ease and cheerfulness with which a man in his study, who never had so much experience of suffering as even a toothache would give him, can arrange a system in which the everlasting torture of millions is casually admitted as an item. But I, to whom seriously speaking, existence has been for much of my life nothing but suffering, and who always looked on my existence as a misfortune, must necessarily feel reasonings of this kind in a different way. This soul-ache, this throb of pain, that seems as if it were an actual anguish of the immaterial part itself, is a dreadful teacher, and gives a fearful sense of what the chances of an immortal existence might be, and what the responsibilities of originating such existence.

"I am not one of the shallow sort, who think that everything for everybody must or ought to end with perfect bliss at death. On the contrary, I do not see how anything but misery in eternal ages is to come from the outpouring into their abyss of wrangling undisciplined souls, who were a torment to themselves and others here, and who would make this world unbearable, were they not all swept off in their turn by the cobweb brush of Death.

"So you see it's all a hopeless muddle to me. Do I then believe nothing? Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ with all my heart, all my might. He stands before me the one hopeful phenomenon of history. I adore him as Divine, or all of the Divine that I can comprehend; and when He bids me say to God, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' I smother all my doubts and say it. Those words are the rope thrown out to me, choking in the waters,—the voice from the awful silence. 'God so loved the world that He gave His own Son.' I try

to believe that He *loves* this world, but I have got only so far as 'Help 'Thou mine unbelief.'

"Now, as to talking out all this to the parson, what good would it do? He is preaching well and working bravely. His preaching suits the state of advancement to which New England has come, and the process which he and ministers of his sort institute, of having every point in theology fully discussed by the common people, is not only a capital drill for their minds, but it will have its effect in the end on their theologies, and out of them all the truth of the future will arise.

"So you see my position, and why I am niched here for life as 'a schoolmaster. Come up and see me sometime. I have a housekeeper who is as ugly as Hecate, but who reads Greek. She makes the best bread and cake in town, keeps my stockings mended and my shirt-ruffles plaited and my house like wax, and hears a class in Virgil every day, after she has 'done her dinner-dishes.' I shall not fall in love with her, though. Come sometime to see me, and bring your new acquisition.—Your brother,

"JONATHAN ROSSITER."

I have given these two letters as the best means of showing to the reader the character of the family with whom my destiny and that of Tina became in future life curiously intertwined.

Among the peculiarly English ideas which the Colonists brought to Massachusetts, which all the wear and tear of democracy have not been able to obliterate, was that of *family*. Family feeling, family pride, family hope and fear and desire, were, in my early day, strongly-marked traits. Genealogy was a thing at the tip of every person's tongue, and in every person's mind; and it is among my most vivid

remembrances, with what a solemn air of intense interest my mother, grandmother, Aunt Lois, and Aunt Keziah would enter into minute and discriminating particulars with regard to the stock, intermarriages, and family settlements of the different persons whose history was under their consideration. "Of a very respectable family," was a sentence so often repeated at the old fireside that its influence went in part to make up my character. In our present days, when every man is emphatically the son of his own deeds, and nobody cares who his mother or grandmother or great-aunt was, there can scarcely be an understanding of this intense feeling of race and genealogy which pervaded simple colonial Massachusetts.

As I have often before intimated, the aristocracy of Massachusetts consisted of two classes, the magistracy and the ministry; and these two, in this theocratic State, played into each other's hands continually. Next to the magistrate and the minister, in the esteem of that community, came the schoolmaster; for education might be said to be the ruling passion of the State.

The history of old New England families is marked by strong lights and deep shadows of personal peculiarity. We appeal to almost every old settler in New England towns, if he cannot remember stately old houses, inhabited by old families, whose histories might be brought to mind by that of Miss Mehitable and her brother. There was in them a sort of intellectual vigour, a ceaseless activity of thought, a passion for reading and study, and a quiet brooding on the very deepest problems of mental and moral philosophy. The characteristic of such families is the greatly disproportioned force of the internal, intellectual, and spiritual life to the external one. Hence come often morbid and diseased forms of manifestation. The threads which connect such persons



with the real life of the outer world are so fine and so weak, that they are constantly breaking and giving way here and there, so that, in such races, oddities and eccentricities are come to be accepted only as badges of family character. Yet from stock of this character have come some of the most brilliant and effective minds in New England; and from them also have come hermits and recluses,—peculiar and exceptional people,—people delightful to the student of human nature, but excessively puzzling to the every-day judgment of mere conventional society.

The Rossiter family had been one of these. It traced its origin to the colony which came out with Governor Winthrop. The eldest Rossiter had been one of the ejected ministers, and came from a good substantial family of the English gentry. For several successive generations there had never been wanting a son in the Rossiter family to succeed to the pulpit of his father. The Rossiters had been leaned on by the magistrates and consulted by the governors, and their word had been law down to the time of Miss Mehitable's father.

The tendency of the stately old families of New England to constitutional melancholy has been well set forth by Dr. Cotton Mather, that delightful old New England grandmother, whose nursery tales of its infancy and childhood may well be pondered by those who would fully understand its farreaching maturity. As I have before remarked, I have high ideas of the wisdom of grandmothers, and therefore do our beloved gossip, Dr. Cotton Mather, the greatest possible compliment in granting him the title.

The ministers of the early colonial days of New England, though well-read, scholarly men, were more statesmen than theologians. Their minds ran upon the actual arrangements of society, which were in a great degree left in their hands,



rather than on doctrinal and metaphysical subtilities. They took their confession of faith just as the great body of Protestant reformers left it, and acted upon it as a practical foundation, without much further discussion, until the time of President Edwards. He was the first man who begun the disintegrating process of applying rationalistic methods to the accepted doctrines of religion, and he rationalised far more boldly and widely than any publishers of his biography have ever dared to let the world know. He sawed the great dam and let out the whole waters of discussion over all New England, and that free discussion led to all the shades of opinion of our modern days. Little as he thought it, yet Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker were the last results of the current set in motion by Jonathan Edwards.

Miss Mehitable Rossiter's father, during the latter part of his life, had dipped into this belt of New Divinity, and been excessively and immoderately interested in certain speculations concerning them. All the last part of his life had been consumed in writing a treatise in opposition to Dr. Stern, another rigorous old cocked-hat of his neighbourhood, who maintained that the Deity had created sin on purpose, because it was a necessary means of the greatest good. Dr. Rossiter thought that evil had only *been permitted*, because it could be overruled for the greatest good; and each of them fought their battle as if the fate of the universe was to be decided by its results.

Considered as a man, in his terrestrial and mundane relations, Dr. Rossiter had that wholesome and homely interest in the things of this mortal life which was characteristic of the New England religious development. While the Puritans were intensely interested in the matters of the soul, they appeared to have a realising sense of the fact that a soul without a body, in a material world, is at a great disadvantage in

getting on. So they exhibited a sensible and commendable sense of the worth of property. They were especially addicted to lawful matrimony, and given to having large families of children; and, if one wife died, they straightway made up the loss by another,—a compliment to the virtues of the female sex which womankind appear always gratefully to appreciate.

Parson Rossiter had been three times married; first, to a strong-grained, homely, highly intellectual woman of one of the first Boston families, of whom Miss Mehitable Rossiter was the only daughter. The Doctor was said to be one of the handsomest men of his times. Nature, with her usual perversity in these matters, made Miss Mehitable an exact reproduction of all the homely traits of her mother, with the addition of the one or two physical defects of her handsome father. No woman with a heart in her bosom ever feels marked personal uncomeliness otherwise than as a great misfortune. Miss Mehitable bore it with a quaint and silent pride. Her brother Jonathan, next to herself in age, the son of a second and more comely wife, was far more gifted in personal points, though not equal to his father. Finally, late in life, after a somewhat prolonged widowhood, Parson Rossiter committed the folly of many men on the downhill side of life, that of marrying a woman considerably younger than himself. She was a pretty, nervous, excitable, sensitive creature, whom her homely elder daughter, Miss Mehitable, no less than her husband, petted and caressed on account of her beauty, as if she had been a child. She gave birth to two more children, a son named Theodore, and a daughter named Emily, and then died.

All the children had inherited from their father the peculiar constitutional tendency to depression of spirits of which we have spoken. In these last two, great beauty and brilliant

powers of mind were united with such a singular sensitiveness and waywardness of nature as made the prospect for happiness in such a life as this, and under the strict requirements of New England society, very problematical.

Theodore ran through a brilliant course in college, notwithstanding constant difficulties with the college authorities, but either could not or would not apply himself to any of the accepted modes of getting bread and butter which a young man must adopt who means to live and get on with other men. He was full of disgusts, and repulsions, and dislikes; everything in life wounded and made him sore; he could or would do nothing reasonably or rationally with human beings, and, to deaden the sense of pain in existence, took to the use of opiates, which left him a miserable wreck on his sister's hands, the father being dead.

Thus far the reader has the history of this family, and intimations of the younger and more beautiful one whose after fate was yet to be connected with ours.

Miss Mehitable Rossiter has always been to me a curious study. Singularly plain as she was in person, old, withered, and poor, she yet commanded a respect, and even reverence, through the whole of a wide circle of acquaintance; for she was well known to some of the most considerable families in Boston, with whom, by her mother's side, she was connected. The interest in her was somewhat like that in old lace, old china, and old cashmere shawls, which, though often excessively uncomely, and looking in the eyes of uninterested people like mere rubbish, are held by connoisseurs to be beyond all price.

Miss Mehitable herself had great pride of character, in the sense in which pride is an innocent weakness, if not a species of virtue. She had an innate sense that she belonged to a good family,—a perfectly quiet conviction that she was

a Bradford by her mother's side, and a Rossiter by her father's side, come what might in this world. She was too well versed in the duties of good blood not to be always polite and considerate to the last degree to all well-meaning common people, for she felt the *noblesse oblige* as much as if she had been a duchess. And, for that matter, in the circles of Old-town everything that Miss Mehitable did and said had a certain weight, quite apart from that of her really fine mental powers. It was the weight of past generations, of the whole Colony of Massachusetts; all the sermons of five generations of ministers were in it, which to a God-fearing community is a great deal.

But in her quaint, uncomely body was lodged, not only a most active and even masculine mind, but a heart capable of those passionate extremes of devotion which belong to the purely feminine side of woman. She was capable of a romantic excess of affection, of an extravagance of hero-worship, which, had she been personally beautiful, might perhaps have made her the heroine of some poem of the heart. It was among the quietly accepted sorrows of her life, that for her no such romance was possible.

Men always admired her as they admired other men, and talked to her as they talked with each other. Many, during the course of her life, had formed friendships with her, which were mere relations of comradeship, but which never touched the inner sphere of the heart. That heart, so warm, so tender, and so true, she kept, with a sort of conscious shame, hidden far behind the entrenchments of her intellect. With an instinctive fear of ridicule, she scarcely ever spoke a tender word, and generally veiled a soft emotion under some quaint phrase of drollery. She seemed forever to feel the strange contrast between the burning, romantic heart and the dry and withered exterior.

Like many other women who have borne the curse of marked plainness, Miss Mehitable had an extravagant valuation for personal beauty. Her younger sister, whose loveliness was uncommon, was a sort of petted idol to her, during all her childish years. At the time of her father's death, she would gladly have retained her with her, but, like many other women who are strong on the intellectual side of their nature, Miss Mehitable had a sort of weakness and helplessness in relation to mere material matters, which rendered her, in the eyes of the family, unfit to be trusted with the bringing up of a bright and wilful child. In fact, as regarded all the details of daily life, Miss Mehitable was the servant of Polly, who had united the offices of servant-of-all-work, house-keeper, nurse, and general factotum in old Parson Rossiter's family, and between whom and the little wilful Emily grievous quarrels had often arisen. For all these reasons, and because Mrs. Farnsworth of the neighbouring town of Adams was the only sister of the child's mother, was herself childless, and in prosperous worldly circumstances, it would have been deemed a flying in the face of Providence to refuse her, when she declared her intention of adopting her sister's child as her own.

Of what came of this adoption I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

## CHAPTER XX.

Miss Asphyxia goes in Pursuit, and my Grandmother gives her Views on Education.

WHEN Miss Asphyxia Smith found that both children really had disappeared from Needmore so completely that no trace of them remained, to do her justice, she felt some solicitude to know what had become of them. There had not

been wanting instances in those early days, when so large a part of Massachusetts was unbroken forest, of children who had wandered away into the woods and starved to death; and Miss Asphyxia was by no means an ill-wisher to any child, nor so utterly without bowels as to contemplate such a possibility without some anxiety.

Not that she in the least doubted the wisdom and perfect propriety of her own mode of administration, which she had full faith would in the end have made a "smart girl" of her little charge. "That 'ere little limb didn't know what was good for herself," she said to Sol, over their evening meal of cold potatoes and boiled beef.

Sol looked round-eyed and stupid, and squared his shoulders, as he always did when this topic was introduced. He suggested, "You don't s'pose they could 'a' wandered off to the maountains where Bijah Peters' boy got lost?"

There was a sly satisfaction in observing the anxious brooding expression which settled down over Miss Asphyxia's dusky features at the suggestion.

"When they found that 'ere boy," continued Sol, "he was all worn to skin and bone; he'd kep' himself a week on berries and ches'nuts and sich, but a boy can't be kep' on what a squirrel can."

"Well," said Miss Asphyxia, "I know one thing; it ain't my fault if they do starve to death. Silly critters, they was; well provided for, good home, good clothes, plenty and plenty to eat. I'm sure you can bear witness ef I ever stinted that 'ere child in her victuals."

"I'll bear you out on that 'ere," said Sol.

"And well you may; I'd scorn not to give any one in my house a good bellyful," quoth Miss Asphyxia.

"That's true enough," said Sol; "everybody 'll know that."



"Well, it's jest total depravity," said Miss Asphyxia. "How can any one help bein' convinced o' that, that has anything to do with young uns?"

But the subject preyed upon the severe virgin's mind; and she so often mentioned it, with that roughening of her scrubby eyebrows which betokened care, that Sol's unctuous good nature was somewhat moved, and he dropped at last a hint of having fallen on a trace of the children. He might as well have put the tips of his fingers into a rolling-mill. Miss Asphyxia was so wide-awake and resolute about anything that she wanted to know, that Sol at last was obliged to finish with informing her that he had heard of the children as having been taken in at Deacon Badger's, over in Oldtown. Sol internally chuckled, as he gave the information, when he saw how immediately Miss Asphyxia bristled with wrath. Even the best of human beings have felt that transient flash when anxiety for the fate of a child supposed to be in fatal danger gives place to unrestrained vexation at the little culprit who has given such a fright.

"Well, I shall jest tackle up and go over and bring them children home agin, at least the girl. Brother, he says he don't want the boy; he wa'n't nothin' but a plague; but I'm one o' them persons that when I undertake a thing I mean to go through with it. Now I undertook to raise that 'ere girl, and I mean to. She needn't think she's goin' to come round me with any o' her shines, going over to Deacon Badger's with lying stories about me. Mis' Deacon Badger needn't think she's goin' to hold up her head over me, if she is a deacon's wife and I *ain't* a perffessor of religion. I guess I *could* be a perffessor if I chose to do as some folks do. That's what I told Mis' Deacon Badger once when she asked me why I didn't jine the church. 'Mis' Badger,' says I, 'per-



fessin' ain't possession, and I'd ruther stand outside the church than go on as some people do inside on't.' "

Therefore it was that, a day or two after, when Miss Mehitable was making a quiet call at my grandmother's, and the party, consisting of my grandmother, Aunt Lois, and Aunt Keziah, were peacefully rattling their knitting-needles, while Tina was playing by the river-side, the child's senses were suddenly paralysed by the sight of Miss Asphyxia driving with a strong arm over the bridge near my grandmother's.

In a moment the little one's heart was in her throat. She had such an awful faith in Miss Asphyxia's power to carry through anything she undertook, that all her courage withered at once at sight of her. She ran in at the back door, perfectly pale with fright, and seized hold imploringly of Miss Mehitable's gown.

"Oh, she's coming! she's coming after me. Don't let her get me!" she exclaimed.

"What's the matter now?" said my grandmother. "What ails the child?"

Miss Mehitable lifted her in her lap, and began a soothing course of inquiry; but the child clung to her, only reiterating, "Don't let her have me! she is dreadful! don't!"

"As true as you live, mother," said Aunt Lois, who had tripped to the window, "there's Miss Asphyxia Smith hitching her horse at our picket fence."

"She is?" said my grandmother, squaring her shoulders, and setting herself in fine martial order. "Well, let her come in; she's welcome, I'm sure. I'd like to talk to that woman! It's a free country, and everybody's got to speak their minds,"—and my grandmother rattled her needles with great energy.

In a moment more Miss Asphyxia entered. She was ar-

rayed in her best Sunday clothes, and made the neighbourly salutations with an air of grim composure. There was silence, and a sense of something brooding in the air, as there often is before the outburst of a storm.

Finally, Miss Asphyxia opened the trenches. "I come over, Mis' Badger, to see about a gal o' mine that has run away." Here her eye rested severely on Tina.

"Run away!" quoth my grandmother, briskly; "and good reason she should run away; all I wonder at is that you have the face to come to a Christian family after her,—that's all. Well, she is provided for, and you've no call to be inquiring anything about *her*. So I advise you to go home, and attend to your own affairs, and leave children to folks that know how to manage them better than you do."

"I expected this, Mis' Badger," said Miss Asphyxia, in a towering wrath, "but I'd have you to know that I ain't a person that's going to take sa'ace from no one. No deacon nor deacon's wife, nor perfessor of religion, 's a goin' to turn up their noses at me! I can hold up my head with any on 'em, and I think your religion might teach you better than takin' up stories agin your neighbours, as a little lyin', artful hussy'll tell." Here there was a severe glance at Miss Tina, who quailed before it, and clung to Miss Mehitable's gown. "Yes, indeed, you may hide your head," she continued, "but you can't git away from the truth; not when I'm round to bring you out. Yes, Mis' Badger, I defy her to say I hain't done well by her, if she says the truth; for I say it now, this blessed minute, and would say it on my dyin' bed, and you can ask Sol ef that 'ere child hain't had everything pervided for her that a child could want,—a good clean bed and plenty o' bedclothes, and good whole clothes to wear, and her belly full o' good victuals every day; an' me a teachin' and a trainin' on her, enough to wear the very life out o' me,—for I

always hated young uns, and this 'ere's a perfect little limb as I ever did see. Why, what did she think I was a goin' to do for her? I didn't make a lady on her; to be sure I didn't: I was a fetchin' on her up to work for her livin' as I was fetched up. I hadn't nothin' more'n she; an' just look at me now; there ain't many folks that can turn off as much work in a day as I can, though I say it that shouldn't. And I've got as pretty a piece of property, and as well seen to, as most any round; and all I've got—house and lands—is my own arnins, honest, so they're! There's folks, I s'pose, that thinks they can afford to keep tavern for all sorts of stragglers and runaways, Injun and white. I never was one o' them sort of folks, an' I should jest like to know ef those folks is able,—that's all. I guess if 'counts was added up, my 'counts would square up better'n theirs."

Here Miss Asphyxia elevated her nose and sniffed over my grandmother's cap-border in a very contemptuous manner, and the cap-border bristled defiantly, but undismayed, back again.

"Come now, Mis' Badger, have it out; I ain't afraid of you! I'd just like to have you tell me what I could ha' done more nor better for this child."

"Done!" quoth my grandmother, with a pop like a roasted chestnut bursting out of the fire. "Why, you've done what you'd no business to. You'd no business to take a child at all; you haven't got a grain of motherliness in you. Why, look at natur', that might teach you that more than meat and drink and clothes is wanted for a child. Hens brood their chickens, and keep 'em warm under their wings; and cows lick their calves and cosset 'em, and it's a mean shame that folks will take 'em away from them. There's our old cat will lie an hour on the kitchen floor and let her kittens lug and pull at her, atween sleeping and waking, just to keep 'em

warm and comfortable, you know. 'T ain't just feedin' and clothin' back and belly that's all; it's *broodin'* that young creeturs wants; and you hain't got a bit of broodin' in you; your heart's as hard as the nether mill-stone. Sovereign grace may soften it some day, but nothin' else can; you're a poor, old, hard, worldly woman, Miss Asphyxia Smith, that's what *you* are! If divine grace could have broken in upon you, and given you a heart to love the child, you might have brought her up, 'cause you are a smart woman, and an honest one; that nobody denies."

Here Miss Mehitable took up the conversation, surveying Miss Asphyxia with that air of curious attention with which one studies a human being entirely out of the line of one's personal experience. Miss Mehitable was, as we have shown, in every thread of her being and education an aristocrat, and had for Miss Asphyxia that polite, easy tolerance which a sense of undoubted superiority gives, united with a shrewd pleasure in the study of a new and peculiar variety of the human species.

"My good Miss Smith," she observed, in conciliatory tones, "by your own account you must have had a great deal of trouble with this child. Now I propose for the future to relieve you of it altogether. I do not think you would ever succeed in making as efficient a person as yourself of her. It strikes me," she added, with a humorous twinkle of her eye, "that there are radical differences of nature, which would prevent her growing up like yourself. I don't doubt you conscientiously intended to do your duty by her, and I beg you to believe that you need have no further trouble with her."

"Goodness gracious knows," said Miss Asphyxia, "the child ain't much to fight over,—she was nothin' but a plague;

and I'd rather have done all she did any day, than to 'a' had her round under my feet. I hate young uns, anyway."

"Then why, my good woman, do you object to parting with her?"

"Who said I did object? I don't care nothin' about parting with her; all is, when I begin a thing I like to go through with it."

"But if it isn't worth going through with," said Miss Mehitable, "it's as well to leave it, is it not?"

"And I'd got her clothes made,—not that they're worth so very much, but then they're worth just what they *are* worth, anyway," said Miss Asphyxia.

Here Tina made a sudden impulsive dart from Miss Mehitable's lap, and ran out of the back-door, and over to her new home, and up into the closet of the chamber where was hanging the new suit of homespun in which Miss Asphyxia had arrayed her. She took it down and rolled the articles all together in a tight bundle, which she secured with a string, and, before the party in the kitchen had ceased wondering at her flight, suddenly reappeared, with flushed cheeks and dilated eyes, and tossed the bundle into Miss Asphyxia's lap. "There's every bit you ever gave me," she said; "I don't want to keep a single thing."

"My dear, is that a proper way to speak?" said Miss Mehitable, reprovingly; but Tina saw my grandmother's broad shoulders joggling with a secret laugh, and discerned twinkling lines in the reproving gravity which Miss Mehitable tried to assume. She felt pretty sure of her ground by this time.

"Well, it's no use talkin'," said Miss Asphyxia, rising. "If folks think they're able to bring up a beggar child like a lady, it's their look-out and not mine. I wasn't aware," she added, with severe irony, "that Parson Rossiter left so much

of an estate that you could afford to bring up other folks' children in silks and satins."

"Our estate isn't much," said Miss Mehitable, good-naturedly, "but we shall make the best of it."

"Well, now, you just mark my words, Miss Rossiter," said Miss Asphyxia, "that 'ere child will never grow up a smart woman with *your* bringin' up; she'll run jest right over *you*, and you'll let her have her head in everything. I see jest how't 'll be; I don't want nobody to tell me."

"I dare say you are quite right, Miss Smith," said Miss Mehitable; "I haven't the slightest opinion of my own powers in that line; but she may be happy with me for all that."

"Happy?" repeated Miss Asphyxia, with an odd intonation, as if she were repeating a sound of something imperfectly comprehended, and altogether out of her line. "O, well, if folks is goin' to begin to talk about *that*, I hain't got time; it don't seem to me that *that's* what this 'ere world's for."

"What is it for, then?" said Miss Mehitable, who felt an odd sort of interest in the human specimen before her.

"Meant for? Why, for hard work, I s'pose; that's all I ever found it for. Talk about coddling! it's little we get o' that, the way the Lord fixes things in this world, dear knows. He's pretty up and down with us, by all they tell us. You must take things right off, when they're goin'. Ef you don't, so much the worse for you; they won't wait for you. Lose an hour in the morning, and you may chase it till ye drop down, you never'll catch it! That's the way things goes, and I should like to know who's a going to stop to quiddle with young uns? 'T ain't me, that's certain; so, as there's no more to be made by this 'ere talk, I may's well be goin'. You're welcome to the young un, ef you say so; I



jest wanted you to know that what I begun I'd 'a' gone through with, ef you hadn't stepped in; and I didn't want no reflections on my good name, neither, for I had my ideas of what's right, and can have 'em yet, I s'pose, if Mis' Badger does think I've got a heart of stone. I should like to know how I'm to have any other when I ain't elected, and I don't see as I am, or likely to be, and I don't see neither why I ain't full as good as a good many that be."

"Well, well, Miss Smith," said Miss Mehitable, "we can't any of us enter into those mysteries, but I respect your motives, and would be happy to see you any time you will call, and I'm in hopes to teach this little girl to treat you properly," she said, taking the child's hand.

"Likely story," said Miss Asphyxia, with a short, hard laugh. "She'll get ahead o' you, you'll see that; but I don't hold malice, so good morning,"—and Miss Asphyxia suddenly and promptly departed, and was soon seen driving away at a violent pace.

"Upon my word, that woman isn't so bad, now," said Miss Mehitable, looking after her, while she leisurely inhaled a pinch of snuff.

"O, I'm so glad you didn't let her have me!" said Tina.

"To think of a creature so dry and dreary, so devoid even of the conception of enjoyment in life," said Miss Mehitable, "hurrying through life without a moment's rest,—without even the capacity of resting if she could, and all for what?"

"For my part, mother, I think you were down too hard on her," said Aunt Lois.

"Not a bit," said my grandmother, cheerily. "Such folks ought to be talked to; it may set her to thinking, and do her good. I've had it on my heart to give that woman a piece of my mind ever since the children came here. Come here, my



poor little dear," said she to Tina, with one of her impulsive outgushes of motherliness. "I know you must be hungry by this time; come into the buttery, and see what I've got for you."

Now there was an indiscreet championship of Miss Tina, a backing of her in her treatment of Miss Asphyxia, in this overflow, which Aunt Lois severely disapproved, and which struck Miss Mehitable as not being the very best thing to enforce her own teachings of decorum and propriety.

The small young lady tilted into the buttery after my grandmother, with the flushed cheeks and triumphant air of a victor, and they heard her little tongue running with the full assurance of having a sympathetic listener.

"Now mother will spoil that child, if you let her," said Aunt Lois. "She's the greatest hand to spoil children; she always lets 'em have what they ask for. I expect Susy's boys'll be raising Cain round the house; they would if it wasn't for me. They have only to follow mother into that buttery, and out they come with great slices of bread and butter, any time of day,—yes, and even sugar on it, if you'll believe me."

"And does 'em good, too," said my grandmother, who reappeared from the buttery, with Miss Tina tilting and dancing before her, with a confirmatory slice of bread and butter and sugar in her hand. "Tastes good, don't it, dear?" said she, giving the child a jovial chuck under her little chin.

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Tina; "I'd like to have old nasty Sphixy see me now."

"Tut, tut! my dear," said grandmother; "good little girls don't call names;"—but at the same time the venerable gentlewoman nodded and winked in the most open manner across the curly head at Miss Mehitable, and her portly

shoulders shook with laughter, so that the young culprit was not in the least abashed at the reproof.

"Mother, I do wonder at you!" said Aunt Lois, indignantly.

"Never you mind, Lois; I guess I've brought up more children than ever you did," said my grandmother, cheerily. "There, my little dear," she added, "you may run down to your play now, and never fear that anybody's going to get you."

Miss Tina, upon this hint, gladly ran off to finish an architectural structure of pebbles by the river, which she was busy in building at the time when the awful vision of Miss Asphyxia appeared; and my grandmother returned to her buttery to attend to a few matters which had been left unfinished in the morning work.

"It is a very serious responsibility," said Miss Mehitable, when she had knit awhile in silence, "at my time of life, to charge one's self with the education of a child. One treats one's self to a child as one buys a picture or a flower, but the child will not remain a picture or a flower; and then comes the awful question, what it may grow to be, and what share you may have in determining its future?"

"Well, old Parson Moore used to preach the best sermons on family government that ever I heard," said Aunt Lois. "He said you must begin in the very beginning and break a child's will,—short off,—nothing to be done without that. I remember he whipped little Titus, his first son, off and on, nearly a whole day, to make him pick up a pocket-handkerchief."

Here the edifying conversation was interrupted by a loud explosive expletive from the buttery, which showed that my grandmother was listening with anything but approbation.

"FIDDLESTICKS!" quoth she.

"And did he succeed in entirely subduing the child's will in that one effort?" said Miss Mehitable, musingly.

"Well, no. Mrs. Moore told me he had to have twenty or thirty just such spells before he brought him under; but he persevered, and he broke his will at last,—at least so far that he always minded when his father was round."

"FIDDLESTICKS!" quoth my grandmother, in a yet louder and more explosive tone.

"Mrs. Badger does not appear to sympathise with your views," said Miss Mehitable.

"O, mother? Of course she don't; she has her own ways and doings, and she won't hear to reason," said Aunt Lois.

"Come, come, Lois; I never knew an old maid who didn't think she knew just how to bring up children," said my grandmother. "Wish you could have tried yourself with that sort of doxy when you was little. Guess if I'd broke your will, I should ha' had to break you for good an' all, for your will is about all there is of you! But I tell you, I had too much to do to spend a whole forenoon making you pick up a pocket-handkerchief. When you didn't mind, I hit you a good clip, and picked it up myself; and when you wouldn't go where I wanted you, I picked you up, neck and crop, and put you there. That was my government. I let your will take care of itself. I thought the Lord had given you a pretty strong one, and he knew what 'twas for, and could take care of it in his own time, which hain't come as yet, I see."

Now this last was one of those personal thrusts with which dear family friends are apt to give arguments a practical application; and Aunt Lois's spare, thin cheeks flushed up as she said, in an aggrieved tone, "Well, I s'pose I'm dreadful, of course. Mother always contrives to turn round on me."

"Well, Lois, I hate to hear folks talk nonsense," said my

grandmother, who by this time had got a pot of cream under her arm, which she was stirring with the pudding-stick; and this afforded her an opportunity for emphasising her sentences with occasional dumps of the same.

"People don't need to talk to me," she said, "about Parson Moore's government. 'Tite Moore wasn't any great shakes, after all the row they made about him. He was well enough while his father was round, but about the worst boy that ever I saw when his eye was off from him. Good or bad, my children was about the same behind my back that they were before my face, anyway."

"Well, now, there was Aunt Sally Morse," said Aunt Lois, steadily ignoring the point of my grandmother's discourse. "There was a woman that brought up children exactly to suit me. Everything went like clock-work with her babies; they were nursed just so often, and no more; they were put down to sleep at just such a time, and nobody was allowed to rock 'em, or sing to 'em, or fuss with 'em. If they cried, she just whipped them till they stopped; and when they began to toddle about, she never put things out of their reach, but just slapped their hands whenever they touched them, till they learnt to let things alone."

"Slapped their hands!" quoth my grandmother, "and learnt them to let things alone! I'd like to ha' seen that tried on my children. Sally had a set of white, still children, that were all just like dipped candles by natur', and she laid it all to her management; and look at 'em now they're grown up. They're decent, respectable folks, but noways better than other folks' children. Lucinda Morse ain't a bit better than you are, Lois, if she was whipped and made to lie still when she was a baby, and you were taken up and rocked when you cried. All is, they had hard times when they were little, and cried themselves to sleep nights, and were hector'd

and worried when they ought to have been taking some comfort. Ain't the world hard enough, without fighting babies, I want to know? I hate to see a woman that don't want to rock her own baby, and is contriving ways all the time to shirk the care of it. Why, if all the world was that way, there would be no sense in Scriptur'. 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you,' the Bible says, taking for granted that mothers were made to comfort children and give them good times when they are little. Sally Morse was always talking about her system. She thought she did wonders, 'cause she got so much time to piece bed-quilts, and work counterpanes, and make pickles, by turning off her children; but I took my comfort in mine, and let them have their comfort as they went along. It's about all the comfort there is in this world, anyway, and they're none the worse for it now, as I see."

"Well, in all these cases there is a medium, if we could hit it," said Miss Mehitable. "There must be authority over these ignorant, helpless little folks in early years, to keep them from ruining themselves."

"O yes. Of course there must be government," said my grandmother. "I always made my children mind me; but I wouldn't pick quarrels with 'em, nor keep up long fights to break their will; if they didn't mind, I came down on 'em, and had it over with at once, and then was done with 'em. They turned out pretty fair, too," said my grandmother, complacently, giving an emphatic thump with her pudding-stick.

"I was reading Mr. John Locke's treatise on education yesterday," said Miss Mehitable. "It strikes me there are many good ideas in it."

"Well, one live child puts all your treatises to rout," said my grandmother. "There ain't any two children alike; and

what works with one won't with another. Folks have just got to open their eyes, and look and see what the Lord meant when he put the child together, if they can, and not stand in his way; and after all we must wait for sovereign grace to finish the work; if the Lord don't keep the house, the watchman waketh but in vain. Children are the heritage of the Lord,—that's all you can make of it."

My grandmother, like other warm-tempered, impulsive, dictatorial people, had formed her theories of life to suit her own style of practice. She was, to be sure, autocratic in her own realm, and we youngsters knew that, at certain times, when her blood was up, it was but a word and a blow for us, and that the blow was quite likely to come first and the word afterward; but the temporary severities of kindly-natured, generous people never lessen the affection of children or servants, any more than the too hot rays of the benignant sun, or the too driving patter of the needful rain. When my grandmother detected us in a childish piece of mischief, and soundly cuffed our ears, or administered summary justice with immediate polts of her rheumatic crutch, we never felt the least rising of wrath or rebellion, but only made off as fast as possible, generally convinced that the good woman was in the right of it, and that we got no more than we deserved.

I remember one occasion when Bill had been engaged in making some dressed chickens dance, which she had left trussed up with the liver and lights duly washed and replaced within them. Bill set them up on their pins, and put them through active gymnastics, in course of which those interior treasures were rapidly scattered out upon the table. A howl of indignation from grandmother announced coming wrath, and Bill darted out of the back door, while I was summarily seized and chastised.



"Grandmother, grandmother! *I* didn't do it,—it was Bill."

"Well, but I can't catch Bill, you see," said my venerable monitor, continuing the infliction.

"But I didn't do it."

"Well, let it stand for something you did do, then," quoth my grandmother, by this time quite pacified; "you do bad things enough that you ain't whipped for, any day."

The whole resulted in a large triangle of pumpkin pie, administered with the cordial warmth of returning friendship, and thus the matter was happily adjusted. Even the prodigal son Bill, when, returning piteously, and standing penitent under the milk-room window, he put in a submissive plea, "Please, grandmother, I won't do so any more," was allowed a peaceable slice of the same comfortable portion, and bid to go in peace.

I remember another funny instance of my grandmother's discipline. It was when I was a little fellow, seated in the chimney-corner at my grandfather's side. I had discovered a rising at the end of my shoe-sole, which showed that it was beginning to come off. It struck me as a funny thing to do to tear up the whole sole, which piece of mischief my grandfather perceiving, he raised his hand to chastise.

"Come here, Horace, quick!" said my grandmother, imperatively, that she might save me from the impending blow.

I lingered, whereat she made a dart at me, and seized me. Just as my grandfather boxed my ear on one side, she hit me a similar cuff on the other.

"Why didn't you come when I called you?" she said: "now you've got your ears boxed both sides."

Somewhat bewildered, I retreated under her gown in dis-



grace, but I was, after a relenting moment, lifted into her lap, and allowed to go to sleep upon her ample bosom.

"Mother, why don't you send that boy to bed, nights?" said Aunt Lois. "You never have any regular rules about anything."

"Law, he likes to sit up and see the fire as well as any of us, Lois; and do let him have all the comfort he can as he goes along, poor boy! there ain't any too much in this world, anyway."

"Well, for my part, I think there ought to be *system* in bringing up children," said Aunt Lois.

"Wait till you get 'em of your own, and then try it, Lois," said my grandmother, laughing with a rich, comfortable laugh, which rocked my little sleepy head up and down, as I drowsily opened my eyes with a delicious sense of warmth and security.

From all these specimens it is to be inferred that the theorists on education will find no improvement in the contemplation of my grandmother's methods, and will pronounce her a pig-headed, passionate, impulsive, soft-hearted body, as entirely below the notice of a rational, inquiring mind as an old brooding hen, which model of maternity in many respects she resembled. It may be so, but the longer I live, the more faith I have in grandmothers and grandmotherly logic, of which, at some future time, I shall give my views at large.

## CHAPTER XXI.

What is to be done with the Boy?

"WELL," said my Aunt Lois, as she gave the last sweep to the hearth, after she had finished washing up the supper-dishes; "I've been up to Ebal Scran's store this afternoon, to

see about soling Horace's Sunday-shoes. Ebal will do'em as reasonable as any one; and he spoke to me to know whether I knew of any boy that a good family would like to bind out to him for an apprentice, and I told him I'd speak to you about Horace. It'll be time pretty soon to think of putting him at something."

Among the many unexplained and inexplicable woes of childhood, are its bitter antagonisms, so perfectly powerless, yet often so very decided, against certain of the grown people who control it. Perhaps some of us may remember respectable, well-meaning people, with whom in our mature years we live in perfect amity, but who in our childhood appeared to us bitter enemies. Children are remarkably helpless in this respect, because they cannot choose their company and surroundings as grown people can; and are sometimes entirely in the power of those with whom their natures are so unsympathetic that they may be almost said to have a constitutional aversion to them. Aunt Lois was such a one to me, principally because of her forecasting, untiring, pertinacious, care-taking propensities. She had already looked over my lot in life, and set down in her own mind what was to be done with me, and went at it with a resolute energy that would not wait for the slow development of circumstances.

That I should want to study, as my father did,—that I should for this cause hang as an unpractical, unproductive, dead weight on the family,—was the evil which she saw in prospective, against which my grandfather's placid easy temper, and my grandmother's impulsive bountifulness, gave her no security. A student in the family, and a son in college, she felt to be luxuries to which a poor widow in dependent circumstances had no right to look forward, and therefore she opened the subject betimes, with prompt energy, by the proposition above stated.

My mother, who sat on the other side of the fireplace, looked at me with a fluttering look of apprehension. I flushed up in a sort of rage that somehow Aunt Lois always succeeded in putting me into. "I don't want to be a shoemaker, and I won't neither," I said.

"Tut, tut," said my grandfather, placidly, from his corner; "we don't let little boys say 'won't' here."

I now burst out crying, and ran to my grandmother, sobbing as if my heart would break.

"Lois, *can't* you let this boy alone?" said my grandmother, vengefully; "I do wonder at you. Poor little fellow! his father ain't quite cold in his grave yet, and you want to pitch him out into the world,"—and my grandmother seized me in her strong arms, and lulled me against her ample bosom. "There, poor boy, don't you cry; you shan't, no, you shan't; you shall stay and help grandma, so you shall."

"Great help he is," said Aunt Lois, contemptuously; "gets a book in his hand and goes round with his head in a bag; never gives a message right, and is always stumbling over things that are right in his way. There's Harry, now, is as handy as a girl, and if he says he'll do a thing, I know 't'll be done,"—and Aunt Lois illustrated her doctrine by calling up Harry, and making him stretch forth his arms for a skein of blue-mixed yarn which she was going to wind. The fire-light shone full on his golden curls and clear blue eyes as he stood obediently and carefully yielding to Aunt Lois's quick, positive movements. As she wound, and twitched, and pulled, with certainly twice the energy that the work in hand required, his eyes followed her motions with a sort of quiet drollery; there was a still, inward laugh in them, as if she amused him greatly.

Such open comparisons between two boys might have gone far to destroy incipient friendship; but Harry seemed

to be in a wonderful degree gifted with the faculties that made him a universal favourite. All the elders of the family liked him, because he was quiet and obedient, always doing with cheerful promptness exactly what he was bidden, unless, as sometimes happened in our family circle, he was bidden to do two or three different things at one and the same time, when he would stand looking innocently puzzled, till my grandmother and Aunt Lois and Aunt Keziah had settled it among them whose was to be the ruling will. He was deft and neat-handed as a girl about any little offices of a domestic nature; he was thoughtful and exact in doing errands; he was delicately clean and neat in his personal habits; he never tracked Aunt Lois's newly-scoured floor with the traces of unwiped shoes; he never left shavings and litter on a cleanly-swept hearth, or tumbled and deranged anything, so that he might safely be trusted on errands even to the most sacred precincts of a housekeeper's dominions. What boy with all these virtues is not held a saint by all women-folk? Yet, though he was frequently commended in all those respects, to my marked discredit, Harry was to me a sort of necessary of life. There was something in his nature that was wanting to mine, and I attached myself to him with a pertinacity which had never before marked my intercourse with any boy.

A day or two after the arrival of the children, the minister and Lady Lothrop had called on my grandmother in all the dignity of their station, and taken an approving view of the boy. Lady Lothrop had engaged to take him under her care, and provide a yearly sum for his clothing and education. She had never had a child of her own, and felt that diffidence about taking the entire charge of a boy which would be natural to a person of fastidious and quiet habits, and she therefore signified that it would be more agreeable to her if

my grandmother would allow him to make one of her own family circle,—a proposal to which she cheerfully assented, saying, that “one more chick makes little difference to an old hen.”

I immediately petitioned that I might have Harry for a bed-fellow, and he and I were allowed a small bedroom to ourselves at the head of the back-stairs. It was a rude little crib, roughly fenced off from the passage-way by unplanned boards of different heights. A pine table, two stools, a small trundle-bed, and a rude case of drawers, were all its furniture. Harry's love of order was strikingly manifest in the care which he took of this little apartment. His few articles of clothing and personal belongings all had their exact place, and always were bestowed there with scrupulous regularity. He would adjust the furniture, straighten the bed-clothing, and quietly place and replace the things that I in my fitful, nervous eagerness was always disarranging; and when, as often happened in one of my spasms of enthusiasm, I turned everything in the room topsy-turvy, searching for something I had lost, or projecting some new arrangement, he would wait peaceably till I had finished, and then noiselessly get everything back again into its former order. He never quarrelled with me, or thwarted me in my turbulent or impatient moods, but seemed to wait for me to get through whatever I was doing, when he would come in and silently rearrange. He was, on the whole, a singularly silent child, but with the kind of silence which gives a sense of companionship. It was evident that he was always intensely observant and interested in whatever was going on before him, and ready at any moment to take a friendly part when he was wanted; but for the most part his place in the world seemed that of an amused listener and observer. Life seemed to present itself to him as a curious spectacle, and he was never tired of looking and

listening, watching the ways and words of all our family circle, and often smiling to himself as if they afforded him great diversion. Aunt Lois, with her quick, sharp movements, her determined, outspoken ways, seemed to amuse him as much as she irritated me, and I would sometimes see him turn away with a droll smile when he had been watching one of her emphatic courses round the room. He had a certain tact in avoiding all the sharp corners and angles of her character, which, in connexion with his handiness and his orderly ways, caused him at last to become a prime favourite with her. With his quiet serviceableness and manual dexterity, he seemed to be always the one that was exactly wanting to do an odd turn, so that at last he came to be depended on for many little inferior offices, which he rendered with a good-will none the less cheerful because of his silence.

“There’s time enough to think about what Horace is to do another year,” said my grandfather, having reflected some moments after the passage of arms between my grandmother and Aunt Lois. “He’s got to have some schooling. The boys had both better go to school for this winter, and then we’ll see what next.”

“Well, I just mentioned about Ebal Scran, because he’s a good man to take a boy, and he wants one now. If we don’t take that chance, it may not come again.”

“Wal, Miss Lois,” said Sam Lawson, who had sat silent in a dark corner of the chimney, “ef I was to say about Horace, I’d say he’d do better for somethin’ else ’n shoe-makin’. He’s the most amazin’ little fellow to read I ever see. As much as a year ago Jake Marshall and me and the other fellers round to the store used to like to get him to read the *Columbian Sentinel* to us; he did it off slicker than any on us could, he did,—there wan’t no kind o’ word could stop



him. I should say such a boy as that ought to have a liberal education."

"And who's going to pay for it?" said Aunt Lois, turning round on him sharply. "I suppose you know it costs something to get a man through college. We never can afford to send him to college. It's all we can do to bring his Uncle Bill through."

"Well, well," said my grandmother, "there's no use worrying the child, one way or the other."

"They can both go to district school this winter," said my grandfather.

"Well," said Aunt Lois, "the other day I found him down in a corner humping his back out over a Latin grammar that I'd put away with all the rest of his father's books on the back side of the upper shelf in our closet, and I took it away from him. If he was going to college, why, it's well enough to study for it; but if he isn't we don't want him idlin' round with scraps of Latin in his head like old Jock 'Twitchel,—got just Latin enough to make a fool of his English, and he's neither one thing nor another."

"I do wonder, Lois, what there is under the sun that you don't feel called to see to," said my grandmother. "What do you want to quarrel with the child for? He shall have his Latin grammar if he wants it, and any of the rest of his father's books, poor child. I s'pose he likes 'em because they were his poor father's."

I leaped for joy in my grandmother's lap, for my father's precious books had been in a state of blockade ever since we had been in the house, and it was only by putting a chair on a table one day, when Aunt Lois and my mother were out, that I had managed to help myself to the Latin grammar, out of which my father had begun to teach me before he died.



"Well, well," said Aunt Lois, "at any rate it's eight o'clock, and time these boys went to bed."

Upon this hint Harry and I went to our little bedroom without the ceremony of a candle. It was a frosty autumn night, but a good, clear square of moonlight lay on the floor.

Now Harry, in common with many other very quiet-natured people, was remarkable for a peculiar persistency in all his ways and manners. Ever since I had roomed with him, I had noticed with a kind of silent wonder the regularity of his nightly devotional exercises, to which he always addressed himself before he went to bed, with an appearance of simple and absorbed fervour, kneeling down by the bed, and speaking in a low, earnest tone of voice, never seeming to hurry or to abbreviate, as I was always inclined to do whenever I attempted similar performances. In fact, as usually I said no prayers at all, there was often an awkward pause and stillness on my part, while I watched and waited for Harry to be through with his devotions, so that I might resume the thread of worldly conversation.

Now to me the perseverance with which he performed these nightly exercises was unaccountable. The doctrines which in that day had been gaining ground in New England, with regard to the utter inutility and unacceptableness of any prayers or religious doings of the unregenerate, had borne their legitimate fruits in causing parents to become less and less particular in cultivating early habits of devotion in children; and so, when I had a room to myself, my mother had ceased to take any oversight of my religious exercises; and as I had overheard my Aunt Lois maintaining very stringently that there was no use in it so long as my heart was not changed, I very soon dropped the form. So, when night after night I noticed Harry going on with his devotions,

it seemed to me, from my more worldly point of view, that he gave himself a great deal of unnecessary trouble, particularly if, after all, his prayers did no good. I thought I would speak with him about it, and accordingly this night I said to him, "Harry, do you think it does any good to say your prayers?"

"To be sure I do," he said.

"But if your heart hasn't been changed, your prayer is an abomination to the Lord. Aunt Lois says so," I said, repeating a scriptural form I had often heard quoted.

Harry turned over, and in the fading daylight I saw his eyes, large, clear, and tranquil. There was not the shadow of a cloud in them. "I don't know anything about that," he said quietly. "You see I don't believe that sort of talk. God is our Father; He loves us. If we want things, and ask Him for them, He will give them to us if it is best; mother always told me so, and I find it is so. I promised her always to say these prayers, and to believe that God loves us. I always shall."

"Do you *really* think so, Harry?" I said.

"Why, yes; to be sure I do."

"I mean, do you ever ask God for things you want? I don't mean saying prayers, but asking for anything."

"Of course I do. I always have, and He gives them to me. He always has taken care of me, and He always will."

"Now, Harry," said I, "I want to go to college, and Aunt Lois says there isn't any money to send me there. She wants mother to bind me out to a shoemaker; and I'd rather die than do that. I love to study, and I mean to learn. Now do you suppose if I ask God He will help me?"

"Certainly He will," said Harry, with an incredible firmness and quietness of manner. "Just you try it."

"Don't you want to study and go to college?" said I.

"Certainly I do. I ask God every night that I may *if it is best*," he said, with simplicity.

"It will be a great deal harder for you than for me," I said, "because you haven't any relations."

"Yes, but God *can* do anything He pleases," said Harry, with a sort of energetic simplicity.

The confidence expressed in his manner produced a kind of effect upon me. I had urgent needs, too,—longings which I was utterly helpless ever to fulfil,—particularly that visionary desire to go to college and get an education. "Harry," I said, "you ask God that I may go to college."

"Yes, I will," he answered,—"I'll ask every night. But then," he added, turning over and looking at me, "why don't you ask yourself, Horace?"

It was difficult for me to answer that question. I think that the differences among human beings in the natural power of *faith* are as great as any other constitutional diversity, and that they begin in childhood. Some are born believers, and some are born sceptics. I was one of the latter. There was an eternal query,—a habitual interrogation-point to almost every proposition in my mind, even from childhood,—a habit of looking at anything from so many sides, that it was difficult to get a settled assent to anything.

Perhaps the curious kind of double life that I led confirmed this sceptical tendency. I was certain that I constantly saw and felt things, the assertion of whose existence as I saw them drew down on me stinging reproofs and radical doubts of my veracity. This led me to distrust my own perceptions on all subjects, for I was no less certain of what I saw and felt in the spiritual world than of what I saw and felt in the material; and if I could be utterly mistaken in the one, I could also be in the other.

The repression and silence about this which became the habit of my life formed a covering for a constant wondering inquiry. The habit of reserve on these subjects had become so intense, that even to Harry I never spoke of it. I think I loved Harry more than I loved anything; in fact, before he came to us, I do not think I knew anything of love as a sentiment. My devotion to my father resembled the blind, instinctive worship of a dog for his master. My feeling toward my mother and grandmother was that impulse of want that induces a chicken to run to a hen in any of its little straits. It was an animal instinct,—a commerce of helplessness with help.

For Harry I felt a sort of rudimentary, poetical tenderness, like the love of man for woman. I admired his clear blue eyes, his curling golden hair, his fair, pure complexion, his refined and quiet habits, and a sort of unconsciousness of self that there was about him. His simplicity of nature was incorruptible; he seemed always to speak, without disguise, exactly what he thought, without the least apparent consideration of anything but its truth; and this gave him a strange air of innocency. A sort of quaint humour always bubbling up in little quiet looks and ways and in harmless practical jokes, gave me a constant sense of amusement in his society.

As the reader may have observed, we were a sharp-cut and peculiar set in our house, and sometimes, when the varied scenes of family life below stairs had amused Harry more than common, he would, after we had got into our chamber by ourselves, break into a sudden flow of mimicry,—imitating now Aunt Lois's sharp, incisive movements and decided tones, or flying about like my venerated grandmother in her most confused and hurried movements or presenting a perfect image of Uncle Fliakim's frisky gyrations, till he would set me into roars of laughter; when he would turn gravely

round and ask what I was laughing at. He never mentioned a name, or made remarks about the persons indicated,—the sole reflection on them was the absurd truthfulness of his imitation; and when I would call out the name, he would look at me with eyes brimful of mischief, but in utter silence.

Generally speaking, his language was characterised by a peculiar nicety in the selection of words, and an avoidance of clownish or vulgar phraseology, and was such as marks a child whose early years have all been passed in the intercourse of refined society; but sometimes he would absurdly introduce into his conversation scraps from Sam Lawson's vocabulary, with flashes of mimicry of his shambling gait, and the lanky droop of his hands; yet these shifting flashes of imitation were the only comment he ever made upon him.

After Harry began to share my apartment, my nightly visions became less frequent, because, perhaps, instead of lying wide-awake expecting them, I had him to talk to. Once or twice, indeed, I saw standing by him, after he had fallen asleep, that same woman whose blue eyes and golden hair I had remarked when we were lost in the forest. She looked down on him with an inexpressible tenderness, and seemed to bless him; and I used to notice that he spoke oftener of his mother the next day, and quoted her words to me with the simple, unquestioning veneration which he always showed for them.

One thing about Harry which was striking to me, and which he possessed in common with many still, retiring people, was great vigour in maintaining his individuality. It has been the experience of my life that it is your quiet people who, above all other children of men, are set in their ways and intense in their opinions. Their very reserve and

silence are a fortification behind which all their peculiarities grow and thrive at their leisure, without encountering those blows and shocks which materially modify more outspoken natures. It is owing to the peculiar power of quietness that one sometimes sees characters fashioning themselves in a manner the least to be expected from the circumstances and associates which surround them. As a fair, white lily grows up out of the bed of meadow muck, and, without note or comment, rejects all in the soil that is alien from her being, and goes on fashioning her own silver cup side by side with weeds that are drawing coarser nutriment from the soil, so we often see a refined and gentle nature by some singular internal force unfolding itself by its own laws, and confirming itself in its own beliefs, as wholly different from all that surround it as is the lily from the rag-weed. There are persons, in fact, who seem to grow almost wholly from within, and on whom the teachings, the doctrines, and the opinions of those around them produce little or no impression.

Harry was modest in his bearing; he never put forth an opinion opposed to those around them, unless a special question was asked him; but, even from early childhood, the opinion of no human being seemed to have much power to modify or alter certain convictions on which his life was based.

I remember, one Sunday, our good Parson Lothrop took it into his head to preach one of those cool, philosophical sermons in which certain scholarly and rational Christians in easy worldly circumstances seem to take delight,—a sort of preaching which removes the providence of God as far off from human sympathy as it is possible to be. The amount of the matter, as he stated it, seemed to be, that the Creator had devised a very complicated and thorough-working machine, which He had wound up and set going ages ago, which brought out results with the undeviating accuracy of



clock-work. Of course there was the declaration that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father," and that "the very hairs of our head are numbered," standing square across his way. But we all know that a text of Scripture is no embarrassment at all in the way of a thorough-paced theologian, when he has a favourite idea to establish.

These declarations were explained as an Oriental, metaphorical way of stating that the All-wise had started a grand world-machine on general laws which included the greatest good to the least of His creation.

I noticed that Harry sat gazing at him with clear, wide-open eyes and that fixed attention which he always gave to anything of a religious nature. The inference that I drew from it was, that Harry must be mistaken in his confidence in prayer, and that the kind of fatherly intervention he looked for and asked for in his affairs was out of the question. As we walked home I expected him to say something about it, but he did not. When we were in our room at night, and he had finished his prayers, I said, "Harry, did you notice Dr. Lothrop's sermon?"

"Yes, I noticed it," he said.

"Well, if that is true, what good does it do to pray?"

"It isn't true," he said simply.

"How do you know it isn't?"

"Oh, I *know* better," he said.

"But, Harry,—Dr. Lothrop, you know,—why he's the minister,"—and what could a boy of that day say more?

"He's mistaken there, though," said Harry, quietly, as he would speak of a man who denied the existence of the sun or moon. He was too positive and too settled to be in any frame to argue about it; and the whole of the discourse, which had seemed to me so damaging to his opinions, melted over him like so much moonshine. He fell asleep saying to him-



self, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;" and I lay awake, wondering in my own mind whether this was the way to live, and, if it were, why my grandmother and Aunt Lois, and my father and mother, and all the good people I had ever known, had so many troubles and worries.

Ages ago, in the green, flowery hollows of the hills of Bethlehem, a young shepherd boy took this view of life, and began his days singing, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," and ended them by saying, "Thou hast taught me from my youth up, and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works;" and his tender communings with an unseen Father have come down to our days as witnesses of green pastures and still waters to be found in this weary work-a-day world, open ever to those who are simple-hearted enough to seek them. It would seem to be the most natural thing in the world that the child of an ever-present Father should live in this way,—that weakness and ignorance, standing within call and reach of infinite grace and strength, should lay hold of that Divine helpfulness, and grow to it and by it, as the vine climbs upon the rock; but yet such lives are the exception rather than the rule, even among the good. But the absolute faith of Harry's mind produced about him an atmosphere of composure and restfulness which was, perhaps, the strongest attraction that drew me to him. I was naturally nervous, sensitive, excitable, and needed the repose which he gave me. His quiet belief that all would be right had a sort of effect on me, and, although I did not fall into his way of praying, I came to have great confidence in it for him, and to indulge some vague hopes that something good might come of it for me.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

## Daily Living in Oldtown.

HENCEFORTH my story must be a cord with three strands, inexplicably intertwined, and appearing and disappearing in their regular intervals, as each occupies for the moment the prominent place. And this threefold cord is composed of myself, Harry, and Tina. To show how the peculiar life of old Massachusetts worked upon us, and determined our growth and character and destinies, is a theme that brings in many personages, many subjects, many accessories. It is strange that no human being grows up who does not so intertwist in his growth the whole idea and spirit of his day, that rightly to dissect out his history would require one to cut to pieces and analyse society, law, religion, the metaphysics and the morals of his times; and, as all these things run back to those of past days, the problem is still further complicated. The humblest human being is the sum total of a column of figures which go back through centuries before he was born.

Old Crab Smith and Miss Asphyxia, if their biographies were rightly written, would be found to be the result and outcome of certain moral and social forces, justly to discriminate which might puzzle a philosopher. But be not alarmed, reader; I am not going to puzzle you, but to return in the briefest time possible to my story.

Harry was adopted into our family circle early in the autumn; and, after much discussion, it was resolved in the family synod that he and I should go to the common school in the neighbourhood that winter, and out of school-hours share between us certain family tasks or "chores," as they were called at home.

Our daily life began at four o'clock in the morning, when

the tapping of Aunt Lois's imperative heels on the back-stairs, and her authoritative rap at our door, dispelled my slumbers. I was never much of a sleeper; my slumbers at best were light and cat-like; but Harry required all my help and my nervous wakefulness to get him to open his drowsy blue eyes, which he always did with the most perfectly amiable temper. He had that charming gift of physical good-humour which is often praised as a virtue in children and in grown people, but which is a mere condition of the animal nature. We all know that there are good-natured animals and irritable animals,—that the cow is tranquil and gentle, and the hyena snarly and fretful; but we never think of praising and rewarding the one, or punishing the other, for this obvious conformation. But in the case of the human animal it always happens that he who has the good luck to have a quiet, imperturbable nature has also the further good luck of being praised for it as for a Christian virtue, while he who has the ill fortune to be born with irritable nerves has the further ill fortune of being always considered a sinner on account of it.

Nobody that has not suffered from such causes can tell the amount of torture that a child of a certain nervous formation undergoes in the mere process of getting accustomed to his body, to the physical forces of life, and to the ways and doings of that world of grown-up people who have taken possession of the earth before him, and are using it, and determined to go on using it, for their own behoof and convenience, in spite of his childish efforts to push in his little individuality and seize his little portion of existence. He is at once laid hold upon by the older majority as an instrument to work out their views of what is fit and proper for himself and themselves; and if he proves a hard-working or creaking instrument, has the further capability of being rebuked and chastened for it.

My first morning feeling was generally one of anger at the sound of Aunt Lois's heels, worthy soul! I have lived to see the day when the tap of those efficient little instruments has seemed to me a most praiseworthy and desirable sound; but in those days they seemed only to be the *reveille* by which I was awakened to that daily battle of my will with hers which formed so great a feature in my life. It imposed, in the first place, the necessity of my quitting my warm bed in a room where the thermometer must have stood below zero, and where the snow, drifting through the loosely-framed window, often lay in long wreaths on the floor.

As Aunt Lois always opened the door and set in a lighted candle, one of my sinful amusements consisted in lying and admiring the forest of glittering frost-work, which had been made by our breath freezing upon the threads of the blanket. I sometimes saw rainbow colours in this frost-work, and went off into dreams and fancies about it, which ended in a doze, from which I was awakened, perhaps, by some of the snow from the floor rubbed smartly on my face, and the words, "How many times must you be called?" and opened my eyes to the vision of Aunt Lois standing over me indignant and admonitory.

Then I would wake Harry. We would spring from the bed and hurry on our clothes, buttoning them with fingers numb with cold, and run down to the back sink-room, where, in water that flew off in icy spatters, we performed our morning ablutions, refreshing our faces and hands by a brisk rub upon a coarse rolling-towel of brown homespun linen. Then with mittens, hats, and comforters, we were ready to turn out with old Cæsar to the barn to help him fodder the cattle. I must say that, when it came to this, on the whole it began to be grand fun for us. As Cæsar went ahead of us with his snow-shovel, we plunged laughing and rolling into the

powdery element, with which we plentifully pelted him. Arrived at the barn, we climbed, like cats, upon the mow, whence we joyously threw down enough for all his foddering purposes, and with such superabundant good-will in our efforts, that, had need so required, we would have stayed all day and flung off all the hay upon the mow: in fact, like the broomstick in the fable, which would persist in bringing water without rhyme or reason, so we overwhelmed our sable friend with avalanches of hay, which we cast down upon him in an inconsiderate fury of usefulness, and out of which we laughed to see him tear his way, struggling, gesticulating and remonstrating, till his black face shone with perspiration, and his woolly head bristled with hay-seeds and morsels of clover.

Then came the feeding of the hens and chickens and other poultry, a work in which we especially delighted, going altogether beyond Cæsar in our largesses of corn, and requiring a constant interposition of his authority to prevent our emptying the crib on every single occasion.

In very severe weather we sometimes found hens or turkeys so overcome with the cold as to require, in Cæsar's view, hospital treatment. This awoke our sympathies, and stimulated our sense of personal importance, and we were never so happy as when trudging back through the snow, following Cæsar with a great cock-turkey lying languidly over his shoulder like a sick baby, his long neck drooping, his wattles, erst so fiery red with pride and valour, now blue and despairing. Great on such occasions were our zeal and excitement, as the cavalcade burst into the kitchen with much noise, and upturning of everything, changing Aunt Lois's quiet arrangements into an impromptu sanitary commission. My grandmother bestirred herself promptly, compounding messes of Indian-meal enlivened with pepper-corns, which were forced

incontinently down the long throat, and which in due time acted as a restorative.

A turkey treated in this way soon recovered his wonted pride of demeanour, and, with an ingratitude which is like the ways of this world, would be ready to bully my grandmother and fly at her back when she was picking up chips, and charge down upon us children with vociferous gobblings, the very first warm day afterwards. Such toils as these before breakfast gave a zest to the smoking hot brown bread, the beans and sausages, which formed our morning meal.

The great abundance of *food* in our New England life is one subject quite worthy of reflection, if we consider the hardness of the soil, the extreme severity of the climate, and the shortness of the growing season between the late frosts of spring and those of early autumn. But, as matter of fact, good, plain food was everywhere in New England so plentiful, that at the day I write of nobody could really suffer for the want of it. The theocracy of New England had been so thoroughly saturated with the humane and charitable spirit of the old laws of Moses, in which, dealing "bread to the hungry" is so often reiterated and enforced as foremost among human duties, that no one ever thought of refusing food to any that appeared to need it; and a traveller might have walked on foot from one end of New England to the other, as sure of a meal in its season as he was that he saw a farmhouse. Even if there was now and then a Nabal like Crab Smith, who, from a native viciousness, hated to do kindness, there was always sure to be in his family an Abigail, ashamed of his baseness, who redeemed the credit of the house by a surreptitious practice of the Christian virtues.

I mention all this because it strikes me, in review of my childhood, that, although far from wealth, and living in many respects in a hard and rough way, I remember great enjoy-



ment in that part of our physical life so important to a child, —the eating and drinking. Our bread, to be sure, was the black compound of rye and Indian which the economy of Massachusetts then made the common form, because it was the result of what could be most easily raised on her hard and stony soil; but I can inform all whom it may concern that rye and Indian bread smoking hot, on a cold winter morning, together with savoury sausages, pork, and beans, formed a breakfast fit for a king, if the king had earned it by getting up in a cold room, washing in ice-water, tumbling through snow-drifts, and foddering cattle. We partook of it with a thorough cheeriness; and black Cæsar, seated on his block in the chimney-corner, divided his rations with Bose, the yellow dog of our establishment, with a contentment which it was pleasant to behold.

After breakfast grandfather conducted family prayers, commencing always by reading his chapter in the Bible. He read regularly through in course, as was the custom in those days, without note, comment, or explanation. Among the many insensible forces which formed the minds of New England children, was this constant, daily familiarity with the letter of the Bible. It was for the most part read twice a day in every family of any pretensions to respectability, and it was read as a reading-book in every common school,—in both cases without any attempt at explanation. Such parts as explained themselves were left to do so. Such as were beyond our knowledge were still read, and left to make what impression they would. For my part, I am impatient of the theory of those who think that nothing that is not understood makes any valuable impression on the mind of a child. I am certain that the constant contact of the Bible with my childish mind was a very great mental stimulant, as it certainly was a cause of a singular and vague pleasure. The wild, poetic



parts of the prophecies, with their bold figures, vivid exclamations, and strange Oriental names and images, filled me with a quaint and solemn delight. Just as a child brought up under the shadow of the great cathedrals of the Old World, wandering into them daily, at morning, or eventide, beholding the many-coloured windows flamboyant with strange legends of saints and angels, and neither understanding the legends, nor comprehending the architecture, is yet stilled and impressed, till the old minster grows into his growth and fashions his nature, so this wonderful old cathedral book insensibly wrought a sort of mystical poetry into the otherwise hard and sterile life of New England. Its passionate Oriental phrases, its quaint, pathetic stories, its wild, transcendent bursts of imagery, fixed an indelible mark in my imagination. Where Kedar and Tarshish, and Pul and Lud, Chittim and the Isles, Dan and Beersheba, were, or what they were, I knew not, but they were fixed stations in my realm of cloud-land. I knew them as well as I knew my grandmother's rocking-chair, yet the habit of hearing of them only in solemn tones, and in the readings of religious hours, gave to them a mysterious charm. I think no New-Englander, brought up under the *régime* established by the Puritans, could really estimate how much of himself had actually been formed by this constant face-to-face intimacy with Hebrew literature. It is worthy of remark, too, that, although in details relating to human crime and vice, the Old Bible is the most plain-spoken book conceivable, it never violated the chastity of a child's mind, or stimulated an improper curiosity. I have been astonished in later years to learn the real meaning of passages to which in family prayers I listened with innocent gravity.

My grandfather's prayers had a regular daily form, to which, in time, I became quite accustomed. No man of not

more than ordinary capacity ever ministered twice a day the year round, in the office of priest to his family, without soon learning to repeat the same ideas in the same phrases, forming to himself a sort of individual liturgy. My grandfather always prayed standing, and the image of his mild, silvery head, leaning over the top of the high-backed chair, always rises before me as I think of early days. There was no great warmth or fervour in these daily exercises, but rather a serious and decorous propriety. They were Hebraistic in their form; they spoke of Zion and Jerusalem, of the God of Israel, the God of Jacob, as much as if my grandfather had been a veritable Jew; and except for the closing phrase, "for the sake of Thy Son, our Saviour," might all have been uttered in Palestine by a well-trained Jew in the time of David.

When prayers were over every morning, the first move of the day, announced in Aunt Lois's brief energetic phrases, was to "get the boys out of the way." Our dinner was packed in a small splint basket, and we were started on our way to the district school, about a mile distant. We had our sleds with us,—dear winter companions of boys,—not the gaily painted, genteel little sledges with which Boston boys in these days enliven the Common, but rude, coarse fabrics, got up by Cæsar in rainy days out of the odds and ends of old sleigh-runners and such rough boards as he could rudely fashion with saw and hatchet. Such as they were, they suited us well,—mine in particular, because upon it I could draw Tina to school; for already, children as we were, things had naturally settled themselves between us. She was supreme mistress, and I the too happy slave, only anxious to be permitted to do her bidding. With Harry and me she assumed the negligent airs of a little empress. She gave us her books to carry, called on us to tie her shoes, charged us to remember her errands, got us to learn her lessons for her, and to help

her out with whatever she had no mind to labour at; and we were only happy to do it. Harry was the most dotting of brothers, and never could look on Tina in any other light than as one whom he must at any price save from every care and every exertion; and as for me, I never dreamed of disputing her supremacy.

One may, perhaps, wonder how a person so extremely aristocratic in all her ideas of female education as Miss Mehitable should commit her little charge to the chance comradeship and unselect society of the district school. But Miss Mehitable, like many another person who has undertaken the task of bringing up a human being, found herself reduced to the doing of a great many things which she had never expected to do. She prepared for her work in the most thorough manner; she read Locke and Milton, and Dr. Gregory's "Legacy to his Daughter," and Mrs. Chapone on the bringing up of girls, to say nothing of Mrs. Hannah More and all the other wise people; and, after forming some of the most carefully considered and select plans of operation for herself and her little charge, she was at length driven to the discovery that in education, as in all other things, people who cannot do as they would must do as they can. She discovered that a woman between fifty and sixty years of age, of a peculiar nature, and with very fixed, set habits, could not undertake to be the sole companion and educator of a lively, wilful, spirited little pilgrim of mortality, who was as active as a squirrel, and as inconsequent and uncertain in all her movements as a butterfly.

By some rare good fortune of nature or of grace, she found her little *protégée* already able to read with fluency, and a tolerable mistress of the use of the needle and thimble. Thus she possessed the key of useful knowledge and of useful fem-

inine practice. But truth compels us to state that there appeared not the smallest prospect, during the first few weeks of Miss Mehitable's educational efforts, that she would ever make a good use of either. In vain Miss Mehitable had written a nice card, marking out regular hours for sewing, for reading, for geography and grammar, with suitable intervals of amusement; and in vain Miss Tina, with edifying enthusiasm, had promised with large eyes and most abundant eloquence, and with many overflowing caresses, to be "so good." Alas! when it came to carrying out the programme, all alone, in the old house, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and all days, Tina gaped and nestled, and lost her thimble and her needle, and was infinite in excuses, and infinite in wheedling caresses, and arguments, enforced with flattering kisses, in favour of putting off the duties now of this hour and now of that, and substituting something more to her fancy. She had a thousand plans of her own for each passing hour, and no end of argument and eloquence to persuade her old friend to follow her ways,—to hear her read an old ballad instead of applying herself to her arithmetic lesson, or listen to her recital of something that she had just picked out of English history, or let her finish a drawing that she was just inspired to commence, or spend a bright, sunny hour in flower-gatherings and rambles by the brown river-side; whence she would return laden with flowers, and fill every vase in the old, silent room till it would seem as if the wilderness literally had blossomed as the rose. Tina's knack for the arranging of vases and twining of vines and sorting of wild-flowers amounted to a species of genius; and, as it was something of which Miss Mehitable had not the slightest comprehension, the child took the lead in this matter with a confident assurance. And, after all, the effect was so cheerful and so delightful, that Miss Mehitable could not find

it in her heart to call to the mind of the little wood-fairy how many hours these cheerful decorations had cost.

Thus poor Miss Mehitable found herself daily being drawn, by the leash that held this gay bird, into all sorts of unseemly gyrations and wanderings, instead of using it to tether the bird to her own well-considered purposes. She could not deny that the child was making her old days pass in a very amusing manner, and it was so much easier to follow the lively little sprite in all her airy ways and caprices, seeing her lively and spirited and happy, than to watch the *ennui* and the yawns and the restlessness that came over her with every effort to conform to the strict letter of the programme, that good Miss Mehitable was always yielding. Every night she went to bed with an unquiet conscience, sensible that, though she had had an entertaining day, she had been letting Tina govern her, instead of governing Tina.

Over that grave supposed necessity of governing Tina, this excellent woman groaned in spirit on many a night after the little wheedling tongue had become silent, and the bright, deluding eyes had gone down under their fringy lashes. "The fact is," said the sad old woman, "Miss Asphyxia spoke the truth. It is a fact, I am not fit to bring up a child. She does rule over me, just as she said she would, and I'm a poor old fool; but then, what am I to do? She is so bright and sweet and pretty, and I'm a queer-looking, dry, odd old woman, with nobody to love me if she doesn't. If I cross her and tie her to rules, and am severe with her, she won't love me, and I am too selfish to risk that. Besides, only think what came of using severe measures with poor Emily! People can be spoilt by severity just as much as by indulgence, and more hopelessly. But what shall I do?"

Miss Mehitable at first had some hope of supporting and backing up the weaknesses of her own heart by having re-

course to Polly's well-known energy. Polly was a veritable dragon of education, and strong in the most efficient articles of faith. Children must have their wills *broken*, as she expressed it, "short off;" they must mind the very first time you speak; they must be kept under and made to go according to rule, and, if they swerved, Polly recommended measures of most sanguinary severity.

But somehow or other Tina had contrived to throw over this grimmest and most Calvinistic of virgins the glamour of her presence, so that she ruled, reigned, and predominated in the most awful sanctuaries of Polly's kitchen, with a fearfully unconcerned and negligent freedom. She dared to peep into her yeast-jug in the very moment of projection, and to pinch off from her downy puffs of newly raised bread, sly morsels for her own cooking experiments; she picked from Polly's very hand the raisins which the good woman was stoning for the most awfully sacred election cake, and resolutely persisted in hanging on her chair and chattering in her ear during the evolution of high culinary mysteries with which the Eleusinian, or any other heathen trumperies of old, were not to be named. Hadn't the receipt for election cake been in the family for one hundred years? and was not Polly the sacred ark and tabernacle in which that divine secret resided? Even Miss Mehitable had always been politely requested to step out of the kitchen when Polly was composing her mind for this serious work, but yet Tina neglected her geography and sewing to be present, chattered all the time, as Polly remarked, like a grist-mill, tasted the sugar and spices, and helped herself at intervals to the savoury composition as it was gradually being put together, announcing her opinions, and giving Polly her advice, with an effrontery to which Polly's submission was something appalling.

It really used to seem to Miss Mehitable, as she listened to



Polly's dissonant shrieks of laughter from the kitchen, as if that venerable old girl must be slightly intoxicated. Polly's laughter was in truth something quite formidable. All the organs in her which would usually be employed in this exercise were so rusty for want of use, so choked up with theological dust and *débris*, that when brought into exercise they had a wild, grating, dissonant sound, rather calculated to alarm. Miss Mehitable really wondered if this could be the same Polly of whom she herself stood in a certain secret awe, whose premises she never invaded, and whose will over and about her had been always done instead of her own; but if she ventured to open the kitchen door and recall Tina, she was sure to be vigorously snubbed by Polly, who walked over all her own precepts and maxims in the most shameless and astonishing manner.

Polly, however, made up for her own compliances by heaping up censures on poor Miss Mehitable when Tina had gone to bed at night. When the bright eyes were fairly closed, and the little bewitching voice hushed in sleep, Polly's conscience awoke like an armed man, and she atoned for her own sins of compliance and indulgence by stringently admonishing Miss Mehitable that she must be more particular about that child, and not let her get her own head so much,—most unblushingly ignoring her own share in abetting her transgressions, and covering her own especial sins under the declaration that "*she* never had undertaken to bring the child up,—she had to get along with her the best way she could,—but the child never would make anything if she was let to go on so." Yet, in any particular case that arose, Polly was always sure to go over to Tina's side and back her usurpations.

For example, it is to be confessed that Tina never could or would be got to bed at those hours which are universally ad-



mitted to be canonical for well brought-up children. As night drew on, the little one's tongue ran with increasing fluency, and her powers of entertainment waxed more dizzy and dazzling; and so, oftentimes as the drizzling, freezing night shut in, and the wind piped and howled lonesomely round the corners of the dusky old mansion, neither of the two forlorn women could find it in her heart to extinguish the little cheerful candle of their dwelling in bed; and so she was to them ballet and opera as she sung and danced, mimicked the dog, mimicked the cat and the hens and the tom-turkey, and at last talked and flew about the room like Aunt Lois, stirred up butter and pshawed like grandma, or invented imaginary scenes and conversations, or improvised unheard-of costumes out of strange old things she had rummaged out of Miss Mehitable's dark closets. Neither of the two worthy women had ever seen the smallest kind of dramatic representation, so that Tina's histrionic powers fascinated them by touching upon dormant faculties, and seemed more wonderful for their utter novelty; and more than once, to the poignant self-reproach of Miss Mehitable, and Polly's most moral indignation, nine o'clock struck, in the inevitable tones of the old family timepiece, before they were well aware what they were doing. Then Tina would be hustled off to bed, and Polly would preach Miss Mehitable a strenuous discourse on the necessity of keeping children to regular hours, interspersed with fragments of quotations from one of her venerable father's early sermons on the Christian bringing up of households. Polly would grow inexorable as conscience on these occasions, and when Miss Mehitable humbly pleaded in extenuation how charming a little creature she was, and what a pleasant evening she had given, Polly would shake her head, and declare that the ways of sin were always pleasant for a time, but at the last it would "bite like a serpent and

sting like an adder;" and when Miss Mehitable, in the most delicate manner, would insinuate that Polly had been sharing the forbidden fruit, such as it was, Polly would flare up in sudden wrath, and declare that "everything that went wrong was always laid to her."

In consequence of this, though Miss Mehitable found the first few weeks with her little charge altogether the gayest and brightest that had diversified her dreary life, yet there was a bitter sense of self-condemnation and perplexity with it all. One day she opened her mind to my grandmother.

"Laws a massy! don't try to teach her yourself," said that plain-spoken old individual,—“send her to school with the boys. Children have to go in droves. What's the use of fussing with 'em all day? let the schoolmaster take a part of the care. Children have to be got rid of sometimes, and we come to them all the fresher for having them out of our sight.”

The consequence was, that Tina rode to school on our sleds in triumph, and made more fun, and did more mischief, and learned less, and was more adored and desired, than any other scholar of us all.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### We take a Step up in the World.

ONE of my most vivid childish remembrances is the length of our winters, the depth of the snows, the raging fury of the storms that used to whirl over the old farmhouse, shrieking and piping and screaming round each angle and corner, and thundering down the chimney in a way that used to threaten to topple all down before it.

The one great central kitchen fire was the only means of warming known in the house, and duly at nine o'clock every

night *that* was raked up, and all the family took their way to bedchambers that never knew a fire, where the very sheets and blankets seemed so full of stinging cold air that they made one's fingers tingle; and where, after getting into bed, there was a prolonged shiver, until one's own internal heat-giving economy had warmed through the whole icy mass. Delicate people had these horrors ameliorated by the application of a brass warming-pan,—an article of high respect and repute in those days, which the modern conveniences for warmth in our houses have entirely banished.

Then came the sleet storms, when the trees bent and creaked under glittering mail of ice, and every sprig and spray of any kind of vegetation was reproduced in sparkling crystals. These were cold days *par excellence*, when everybody talked of the weather as something exciting and tremendous,—when the cider would freeze in the cellar, and the bread in the milk-room would be like blocks of ice,—when not a drop of water could be got out of the sealed well, and the very chimney-back over the raked-up fire would be seen in the morning sparkling with a rime of frost crystals. How the sledges used to squeak over the hard snow, and the breath freeze on the hair, and beard, and woolly comforters around the necks of the men, as one and another brought in news of the wonderful, unheard-of excesses of Jack Frost during the foregone night! There was always something exhilarating about those extremely cold days, when a very forest of logs, heaped up and burning in the great chimney, could not warm the other side of the kitchen; and when Aunt Lois, standing with her back so near the blaze as to be uncomfortably warm, yet found her dish-towel freezing in her hand, while she wiped the teacup drawn from the almost boiling water. When things got to this point, we little folks were jolly. It was an excitement, an intoxication; it filled

life full of talk. People froze the tips of their noses, their ears, their toes; we froze our own. Whoever touched a door-latch incautiously, in the early morning, received a skinning bite from Jack. The axe, the saw, the hatchet, all the iron tools, in short, were possessed of a cold devil ready to snap out at any incautious hand that meddled with him. What ponderous stalactites of ice used to hang from the eaves, and hung unmelted days, weeks, and months, dripping a little, perhaps, towards noon, but hardening again as night came on! and how long all this lasted! To us children it seemed ages.

Then came April with here and there a sunny day. A bluebird would be vaguely spoken of as having appeared. Sam Lawson was usually the first to announce the fact, to the sharp and sceptical contempt of his helpmeet.

On a shimmering April morning, with a half-mind to be sunshiny, Sam saw Harry and myself trotting by his door, and called to us for a bit of gossip.

"Lordy massy, boys, ain't it pleasant? Why, bless your soul and body, I do believe spring's a comin', though Hepsy she won't believe it," he said, as he leaned over the fence contemplatively, with the axe in his hand. "I heard a bluebird last week, Jake Marshall and me, when we was goin' over to Hopkinton to see how Ike Saunders is. You know he is down with the measles. I went over to offer to sit up with him. Where be ye goin' this mornin'?"

"We're going to the minister's. Grandfather isn't well, and Lady Lothrop told us to come for some wine."

"Jes' so," said Sam. "Wal, now, he orter take something for his stomach's sake, Scriptur' goes in for that. A little good hot spiced wine, it's jest the thing; and Ma'am Lothrop she has the very best. Why, some o' that 'ere wine o' hern come over from England years ago when her fust husband

was living; and he was a man that knew where to get his things. Wal, you mustn't stop to play; allers remember when you're sent on errands not to be a-idlin' on the road."

"Sam Lawson, will you split me that oven-wood, or won't you?" said a smart, cracking voice, as the door flew open and Hepsy's thin face and snapping black eyes appeared, as she stood with a weird, wiry, sharp-visaged baby exalted on one shoulder, while in the other hand she shook a dish-cloth.

"Lordy massy, Hepsy, I'm splittin' as fast as I can. There, run along, boys; don't stop to play."

We ran along, for, truth to say, the vision of Hepsy's sharp features always quickened our speed, and we heard the loud, high-pitched storm of matrimonial objurgation long after we had left them behind.

Timidly we struck the great knocker, and with due respect and modesty told our errand to the black doctor of divinity who opened the door.

"I'll speak to Missis," he said; "but this 'ere's Missis' great day; it's Good Friday, and she don't come out of her room the whole blessed day."

"But she sent word that we should come," we both answered in one voice.

"Well, you jest wait here while I go up and see,"—and the important messenger creaked up stairs on tiptoe with infinite precaution, and knocked at a chamber door.

Now there was something in all this reception that was vaguely solemn and impressive to us. The minister's house of itself was a dignified and august place. The minister was in our minds great and greatly to be feared, and to be had in reverence of them that were about him. The minister's wife was a very great lady, who wore very stiff silks, and rode in a coach, and had no end of unknown wealth at her control, so ran the village gossip. And now what this mysterious

Good Friday was, and why the house was so still, and why the black doctor of divinity tiptoed up stairs so stealthily, and knocked at her door so timidly, we could not exactly conjecture;—it was all of a piece with the general marvellous and supernatural character of the whole establishment.

We heard above the silvery well-bred tones that marked Lady Lothrop.

“Tell the children to come up.”

We looked at each other, and each waited a moment for the other to lead the way; finally I took the lead, and Harry followed. We entered a bedroom shaded in a sombre gloom which seemed to our childish eyes mysterious and impressive. There were three windows in the room, but the shutters were closed, and the only light that came in was from heart-shaped apertures in each one. There was in one corner a tall, solemn-looking, high-post bedstead with heavy crimson draperies. There were heavy carved bureaus and chairs of black, solid oak.

At a table covered with dark cloth sat Lady Lothrop, dressed entirely in black, with a great Book of Common Prayer spread out before her. The light from the heart-shaped hole streamed down upon this prayer-book in a sort of dusky shaft, and I was the more struck and impressed because it was not an ordinary volume, but a great folio bound in parchment, with heavy brass knobs and clasps, printed in black-letter, of that identical old edition first prepared in King Edward's time, and appointed to be read in churches. Its very unusual and antique appearance impressed me with a kind of awe.

There was at the other end of the room a tall, full-length mirror, which, as we advanced, duplicated the whole scene, giving back faithfully the image of the spare figure of Lady Lothrop, her grave and serious face, and the strange old book



over which she seemed to be bending, with a dusky gleaming of crimson draperies in the background.

"Come here, my children," she said, as we hesitated; "how is your grandfather?"

"He is not so well to-day; and grandmamma said"——

"Yes, yes; I know," she said, with a gentle little wave of the hand; "I desired that you might be sent for some wine; Pompey shall have it ready for you. But tell me, little boys, do you know what day this is?"

"It's Friday, ma'am," said I, innocently.

"Yes, my child; but do you know *what* Friday it is?" she said.

"No, ma'am," said I, faintly.

"Well, my child, it is Good Friday; and do you know why it is called Good Friday?"

"No, ma'am."

"This is the day when our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ died on the cross for our salvation; so we call it Good Friday."

I must confess that these words struck me with a strange and blank amazement. That there had been in this world a personage called "Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," I had learned from the repetition of His name as the usual ending of prayers at church and in the family; but the real literal fact that He had lived on earth had never presented itself to me in any definite form before; but this solemn and secluded room, this sombre woman shut out from all the ordinary ways of the world, devoting the day to lonely musing, gave to her words a strange reality.

"When did He die?" I said.

"More than a thousand years ago," she answered.

Insensibly Harry had pressed forward till he stood in the shaft of light, which fell upon his golden curls, and his large



blue eyes now had that wide-open, absorbed expression with which he always listened to anything of a religious nature, and, as if speaking involuntarily, he said eagerly, "But He is not dead. He is living; and we pray to Him."

"Why, yes, my son," said Lady Lothrop, turning and looking with pleased surprise, which became more admiring as she gazed,—“yes, He rose from the dead.”

"I know. Mother told me all about that. Day after to-morrow will be Easter-day," said Harry; "I remember."

A bright flash of pleased expression passed over Lady Lothrop's face as she said, "I am glad, my boy, that *you* at least have been taught. Tell me, boys," she said at last, graciously, "should you like to go with me in my carriage to Easter Sunday, in Boston?"

Had a good fairy offered to take us on the rainbow to the palace of the sunset, the offer could not have seemed more unworldly and dream-like. What Easter Sunday was I had not the faintest idea, but I felt it to be something vague, strange, and remotely suggestive of the supernatural.

Harry, however, stood the thing with the simple, solemn, gentlemanlike way which was habitual with him.

"Thank you, ma'am, I shall be very happy, if grand-mamma is willing."

It will be seen that Harry slid into the adoptive familiarity which made my grandmother his, with the easy good faith of childhood.

"Tell your grandmamma if she is willing I shall call for you in my coach to-morrow,"—and we were graciously dismissed.

We ran home in all haste with our bottle of wine, and burst into the kitchen, communicating our message both at once to Aunt Lois and Aunt Keziah. The two women looked

at each other mysteriously; there was a slight flush on Aunt Lois's keen, spare face.

"Well if she's a mind to do it, Kezy, I don't see how we can refuse."

"Mother never would consent in the world," said Aunt Keziah.

"Mother *must*," said Aunt Lois, with decision. "We can't afford to offend Lady Lothrop, with both these boys on our hands. Besides, now father is sick, what a mercy to have 'em both out of the house for a Sunday!"

Aunt Lois spoke this with an intensive earnestness that deepened my already strong convictions that we boys were a daily load upon her life, only endured by a high and protracted exercise of Christian fortitude.

She rose and tapped briskly into the bedroom where my grandmother was sitting reading by my grandfather's bed. I heard her making some rapid statements in a subdued imperative tone. There were a few moments of a sort of suppressed, earnest hum of conversation, and soon we heard sundry vehement interjections from my grandmother,— "Good Friday!—Easter!—pish, Lois!—don't tell me!—old cast-off rags of the scarlet woman,—nothing else.

'Abhor the arrant whore of Rome,  
And all her blasphemies;  
Drink not of her accursèd cup,  
Obey not her decrees.'

"Now, mother, how absurd!" I heard Aunt Lois say. "Who's talking about Rome? I'm sure, if Dr. Lothrop can allow it, we can. It's all nonsense to talk so. We don't want to offend our minister's wife; we must do the things that make for peace;" and then the humming went on for a few moments more and more earnestly, till finally we heard grandmother break out:—

"Well, well, have it your own way, Lois,—you always did and always will, I suppose. Glad the boys'll have a holiday, anyhow. She means well, I dare say,—thinks she's doing right."

I must say that this was a favourite formula with which my grandmother generally let herself down from the high platform of her own sharply defined opinions to the level of Christian charity with her neighbours.

"Who is the whore of Rome?" said Harry to me, confidentially, when we had gone to our room to make ready for our jaunt the next day.

"Don't you know?" said I. "Why, it's the one that burnt John Rogers, in the Catechism. I can show it to you;" and, forthwith producing from my small stock of books my "New England Primer," I called his attention to the picture of Mr. John Rogers in gown and bands, standing in the midst of a brisk and voluminous coil of fire and smoke, over which an executioner, with a supernatural broadaxe upon his shoulders, seemed to preside with grim satisfaction. There was a woman with a baby in her arms and nine children at her side, who stood in a row, each head being just a step lower than the preceding, so that they made a regular flight of stairs. The artist had represented the mother and all the children with a sort of round bundle on each of their heads, of about the same size as the head itself,—a thing which I always interpreted as a further device of the enemy in putting stones on their heads to crush them down; and I pointed it out to Harry as an aggravating feature of the martyrdom.

"Did the whore of Rome do that?" said Harry, after a few moments' reflection.

"Yes, she did, and it tells about it in the poetry which he wrote here to his children the night before his execution;" and forthwith I proceeded to read to Harry that whole

poetical production, delighted to find a gap in his education which I was competent to fill. We were both wrought up into a highly Protestant state by reading this.

"Horace," said Harry, timidly, "*she* wouldn't like such things, would she? she is such a good woman."

"What, Lady Lothrop? of course she's a good woman; else she wouldn't be our minister's wife."

"What was grandma talking about?" said Harry.

"Oh, I don't know; grandmother talks about a great many things," said I. "At any rate, we shall see Boston, and I've always wanted to see Boston. Only think, Harry, we shall go in a coach!"

This projected tour to Boston was a glorification of us children in the eyes of the whole family. To go, on the humblest of terms, to *Boston*,—but to be taken thither in Lady Lothrop's coach, to be trotted in magnificently behind her fat pair of carriage-horses,—that was a good fortune second only to translation.

Boston lay at an easy three hours' ride from Oldtown, and Lady Lothrop had signified to my grandmother that we were to be called for soon after dinner. We were to spend the night and the Sunday following at the house of Lady Lothrop's mother, who still kept the old family mansion at the north end, and Lady Lothrop was graciously pleased to add that she would keep the children over Easter Monday, to show them Boston. Faithful old soul, she never omitted the opportunity of reminding the gainsaying community among whom her lot was cast, of the solemn days of her church, and for one *I* have remembered Easter Sunday and Monday to this day.

Our good fortune received its crowning stroke in our eyes when, running over to Miss Mehitable's with the news, we

found that Lady Lothrop had considerably included Tina in the invitation.

"Well, she must like children better than I do," was Aunt Lois's comment upon the fact, when we announced it. "Now, boys, mind and behave yourselves like young gentlemen," she added, "for you are going to one of the oldest families of Boston, among real genteel people."

"They're Tories, Lois," put in Aunt Keziah, apprehensively.

"Well, what of that? that thing's over and gone now," said Aunt Lois, "and nobody lays it up against the Kitterys, and everybody knows they were in the very first circles in Boston before the war, and connected with the highest people in England, so it was quite natural they should be Tories."

"I shouldn't wonder if Lady Widgery should be there," said Aunt Keziah, musingly, as she twitched her yarn; "she always used to come to Boston about this time o' the year."

"Very likely she will," said my mother. "What relation is she to Lady Lothrop?"

"Why, bless me, don't you know?" said Aunt Lois. "Why, she was Polly Steadman, and sister to old Ma'am Kittery's husband's first wife. She was second wife to Sir Thomas; his first wife was one of the Keatons of Penshurst, in England; she died while Sir Thomas was in the custom-house; she was a poor, sickly thing. Polly was a great beauty in her day. People said he admired her rather too much before his wife died, but I don't know how that was."

"I wonder what folks want to say such things for," quoth my grandmother. "I hate backbiters, for my part."

"We aren't backbiting, mother. I only said how the story ran. It was years ago, and poor Sir Thomas is in his grave long ago."

"Then you might let him rest there," said my grandmother. "Lady Widgery was a pleasant-spoken woman, I remember."

"She's quite an invalid now, I heard," said Aunt Lois. "Our Bill was calling at the Kittery's the other day, and Miss Deborah Kittery spoke of expecting Lady Widgery. The Kitterys have been very polite to Bill; they've invited him there to dinner once or twice this winter. That was one reason why I thought we ought to be careful how we treat Lady Lothrop's invitation. It's entirely through her influence that Bill gets these attentions."

"I don't know about their being the best thing for him," said my grandmother, doubtfully.

"Mother, how can you talk so? What can be better than for a young man to have the run of good families in Boston?" said Aunt Lois.

"I'd rather see him have intimacy with one godly minister of old times," said my grandmother.

"Well, that's what Bill isn't likely to do," quoth Aunt Lois, with a slight shade of impatience. "We must take boys as we find 'em."

"I haven't anything against Tories or Episcopalians," said my grandmother; "but they ain't our sort of folks. I dare say they mean as well as they know how."

"Miss Mehitable visits the Kitterys when she is in Boston," said Aunt Lois, "and thinks everything of them. She says that Deborah Kittery is a very smart intelligent woman—a woman of a very strong mind."

"I dare say they're well enough," said my grandmother. "I'm sure I wish 'em well with all my heart."

"Now, Horace," said Aunt Lois, "be careful you don't sniff, and be sure and wipe your shoes on the mat when you come in, and never on any account speak a word unless you

are spoken to. Little boys should be seen, and not heard; and be very careful you never touch anything you see. It is very good of Lady Lothrop to be willing to take all the trouble of having you with her, and you must make her just as little as possible."

I mentally resolved to reduce myself to a nonentity, to go out of existence, as it were, to be nobody and nowhere, if only I might escape making trouble.

"As to Harry, he is always a good, quiet boy, and never touches things, or forgets to wipe his shoes," said my aunt. "I'm sure he will behave himself."

My mother coloured slightly at this undisguised partiality for Harry, but she was too much under Aunt Lois's discipline to venture a word.

"Lordy massy, Mis' Badger, how do ye all do?" said Sam Lawson, this moment appearing at the kitchen door. "I saw your winders so bright, I thought I'd jest look in and ask after the Deacon. I ben into Miss Mehitable's and there's Polly, she telled me about the chillen goin' to Boston tomorrow. Tiny, she's jest flying round and round like a lightning-bug, most out of her head, she's so tickled; and Polly, she was a i'nin' up her white aprons to get her up smart. Polly, she says it's all pagan flummery about Easter, but she's glad the chillen are goin' to have the holiday." And with this Sam Lawson seated himself on his usual evening roost in the corner, next to black Cæsar, and we both came and stood by his knee.

"Wal, boys, now you're goin' among real, old-fashioned gentility. Them Kitterys used to hold their heads 'mazin' high afore the war, and they've managed by hook and crook to hold on to most what they got, and now by-gones is by-gones. But I believe they don't go out much, or go into com-



pany. Old Ma'am Kittery, she's kind o' broke up about her son that was killed at the Delaware."

"Fighting on the wrong side, poor woman," said my grandmother. "Well, I s'pose he thought he was doing right."

"Yes, yes," said Sam, "there's all sorts o' folks go to make up a world, and, lordy massy, we mustn't be hard on nobody; can't 'spect everybody to be right all round; it's what I tell Polly when she sniffs at Lady Lothrop keepin' Christmas and Easter and sich. 'Lordy massy, Polly,' says I, 'if she reads her Bible, and 's good to the poor, and don't speak evil o' nobody, why, let her have her Easter; what's the harm on't?' But lordy massy, bless your soul and body! there's no kind o' use talking to Polly. She fumed away there, over her i'nin' table; she didn't believe in folks that read their prayers out o' books; and then she had it all over about them tew thousan' ministers that was turned out o' the church in one day in old King Charles's time. Now, raily, Mis' Badger, I don't see why Lady Lothrop should be held 'sponsible for that 'ere, if she is 'Piscopalian."

"Well, well," said my grandmother, "they did turn out the very best men in England, but the Lord took 'em for seed to plant America with. But no wonder we feel it; burnt children dread the fire. I've nothing against Lady Lothrop, and I don't wish evil to the Episcopalians, nor to the Tories. There's good folks among 'em all, and 'the Lord knoweth them that are His.' But I do hope, Horace, that, when you get to Boston, you will go out on to Copp's Hill, and see the graves of the saints. There are the men that I want my children to remember. You come here, and let me read you about them in my 'Magnaly'\* here." And with this my

\* Dr. Cotton Mather's "Magnalia."

grandmother produced her well-worn copy; and, to say the truth, we were never tired of hearing what there was in it. What legends, wonderful and stirring, of the solemn old forest life—of fights with the Indians, and thrilling adventures, and captivities, and distresses—of encounters with panthers and serpents, and other wild beasts, which made our very hair stand on end. Then there were the weird witch-stories, so wonderfully attested; and how Mr. Peter So-and-so did visibly see, when crossing a river, a cat's head swimming in front of the boat, and the tail of the same following behind; and how worthy people had been badgered and harassed by a sudden friskiness in all their household belongings, in a manner not unknown in our modern days. Of all these fascinating legends my grandmother was a willing communicator, and had, to match them, numbers of corresponding ones from her own personal observation and experience; and sometimes Sam Lawson would chime in with long-winded legends, which, being told by flickering firelight, with the wind rumbling and tumbling down the great chimney, or shrieking and yelling and piping around every corner of the house, like an army of fiends trying with tooth and claw to get in upon us, had power to send cold chills down our backs in the most charming manner.

For my part, I had not the slightest fear of the supernatural; it was to me only a delightful stimulant, just crisping the surface of my mind with a pleasing horror. I had not any doubt of the stories of apparitions related by Dr. Cotton, because I had seen so many of them myself; and I did not doubt that many of the witnesses who testified in these cases really *did see* what they said they saw, as plainly as I have seen similar appearances. The consideration of the fact that there really are people in whose lives such phenomena are of frequent occurrence seems to have been entirely left out of the

minds of those who have endeavoured to explain that dark passage in our history.

In my maturer years I looked upon this peculiarity as something resulting from a physical idiosyncrasy, and I have supposed that such affections may become at times epidemics in communities, as well as any other affection of the brain and nervous system. Whether the things thus discerned have an objective reality or not, has been one of those questions at which, all my life, the interrogation point has stood unerased.

On this evening, however, my grandmother thought fit to edify us by copious extracts from "The Second Part, entitled *Sepher-Jearim, i. e., Liber Deum Timentium*; or, Dead Abels;—yet speaking and spoken of."

The lives of several of these "Dead Abels" were her favourite reading, and to-night she designed especially to fortify our minds with their biographies; so she gave us short dips and extracts here and there from several of them, as, for example: "*Janus Nov.-Anglicus*; or, the Life of Mr. Samuel Higginson;"—" *Cadmus Americanus*; or, Life of Mr. Charles Chauncey;"—" *Cyanea Cantio*; or, The Death of Mr. John Avery;"—" *Fulgentius*; or, The Life of Mr. Richard Mather;" and "*Elisha's Bones*; or, Life of Mr. Henry Whitefield."

These Latin titles stimulated my imagination like the sound of a trumpet, and I looked them out diligently in my father's great dictionary, and sometimes astonished my grandmother by telling her what they meant.

In fact, I was sent to bed that night thoroughly fortified against all seductions of the gay and worldly society into which I was about to be precipitated; and my reader will see that there was need enough of this preparation.

All these various conversations in regard to differences of religion went on before us children with the freedom with

which older people generally allow themselves to go on in the presence of the little non-combatants of life. In those days, when utter silence and reserve in the presence of elders was so forcibly inculcated as one of the leading virtues of childhood, there was little calculation made for the effect of such words on the childish mind. With me it was a perfect hazy mist of wonder and bewilderment; and I went to sleep and dreamed that John Rogers was burning Lady Lothrop at the stake, and Polly, as executioner, presided with a great broad-axe over her shoulder, while grandmother, with nine small children, all with stone bundles on their heads, assisted at the ceremony.

Our ride to Boston was performed in a most proper and edifying manner. Lady Lothrop sat erect and gracious on the back seat, and placed Harry, for whom she seemed to have conceived a special affection, by her side. Tina was perched on the knee of my lady's maid, a starched, prim woman who had grown up and dried in all the most sacred and sanctified essences of genteel propriety. She was the very crispness of old-time decorum, brought up to order herself lowly and reverently to all her betters, and with a secret conviction that, aside from Lady Lothrop, the whole of the Oldtown population were rather low Dissenters, whom she was required by the rules of Christian propriety to be kind to. To her master, as having been honoured with the august favour of her mistress's hand, she looked up with respect, but her highest mark of approbation was in the oft-repeated burst which came from her heart in moments of confidential enthusiasm,—“Ah, ma'am! depend upon it, master is a Churchman in his heart. If 'e 'ad only 'ad the good fortune to be born in Hengland, 'e would 'ave been a bishop!”

Tina had been talked to and schooled rigorously by Miss Mehitable as to propriety of manner during this ride; and, as

Miss Mehitable well knew what a chatterbox she was, she exacted from her a solemn promise that she would only speak when she was spoken to. Being perched in Mrs. Margery's lap, she felt still further the stringent and binding power of that atmosphere of frosty decorum which encircled this immaculate waiting-maid. A more well-bred, inoffensive, reverential little trio never surrounded a lady-patroness; and as Lady Lothrop was not much of a talker, and, being a childless woman, had none of those little arts of drawing out children which the maternal instinct alone teaches, our ride, though undoubtedly a matter of great enjoyment, was an enjoyment of a serious and even awful character. Lady Lothrop addressed a few kind inquiries to each one of us in turn, to which we each of us replied, and then the conversation fell into the hands of Mrs. Margery, and consisted mainly in precise details as to where and how she had packed her mistress's Sunday cap and velvet dress; in doing which she evinced the great fluency and fertility of language with which women of her class are gifted on the one subject of their souls. Mrs. Margery felt as if the Sunday cap of the only supporter of the true Church in the dark and heathen parish of Oldtown was a subject not to be lightly or unadvisedly considered; and, therefore, she told at great length how she had intended to pack it first all together,—how she had altered her mind and taken off the bow, and packed that in a little box by itself, and laid the strings out flat in the box,—what difficulties had met her in folding the velvet dress,—and how she had at first laid it on top of the trunk, but had decided at last that the black lutestring might go on top of that, because it was so much lighter, &c., &c., &c.

Lady Lothrop was so much accustomed to this species of monologue, that it is quite doubtful if she heard a word of it; but poor Tina, who felt within herself whole worlds of

things to say, from the various objects upon the road, of which she was dying to talk and ask questions, wriggled and twisted upon Mrs. Margery's knee, and finally gave utterance to her pent-up feelings in deep sighs.

"What's the matter, little dear?" said Lady Lothrop.

"Oh dear! I was just wishing I could go to church."

"Well, you are going to-morrow, dear."

"I just wish I could go now to say *one* prayer."

"And what is that, my dear?"

"I just want to say, 'O Lord! open thou my lips,' said Tina, with effusion.

Lady Lothrop smiled with an air of innocent surprise, and Mrs. Margery winked over the little head.

"I'm *so* tired of not talking!" said Tina, pathetically; "but I promised Miss Mehitable I wouldn't speak unless I was spoken to," she added, with an air of virtuous resolution.

"Why, my little dear, you *may* talk," said Lady Lothrop. "It won't disturb me at all. Tell us now about anything that interests you."

"Oh, thank you ever so much," said Tina; and from this moment, as a little elfin butterfly bursts from a cold, gray chrysalis, Tina rattled and chattered and sparkled, and went on with *verve* and *gusto* that quite waked us all up. Lady Lothrop and Mrs. Margery soon found themselves laughing with a heartiness which surprised them; and, the icy chains of silence being once broken, we all talked, almost forgetting in whose presence we were. Lady Lothrop looked from one to another in a sort of pleased and innocent surprise. Her still, childless, decorous life covered and concealed many mute feminine instincts which now rose at the voice and touch of childhood; and sometimes in the course of our gambols she would sigh, perhaps thinking of her own childless hearth.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

We behold Grandeur.

It was just at dusk that our carriage stood before the door of a respectable mansion at the north end of Boston.

I remember our alighting and passing through a wide hall with a dark oaken staircase, into a low-studded parlour, lighted by the blaze of a fire of hickory logs, which threw out tongues of yellow flame, and winked at itself with a thousand fanciful flashes, in the crinkles and angles of a singularly high and mighty pair of brass andirons.

A lovely, peaceful old lady, whose silvery white hair and black dress were the most striking features of the picture, kissed Lady Lothrop, and then came to us with a perfect outgush of motherly kindness. "Why, the poor little dears! the little darlings!" she said, as she began with her trembling fingers to undo Tina's bonnet-strings. "Did they want to come to Boston and see the great city? Well, they should. They must be cold; there, put them close by the fire, and grandma will get them a nice cake pretty soon. Here, I'll hold the little lady," she said, as she put Tina on her knee.

The child nestled her head down on her bosom as lovingly and confidingly as if she had known her all her days. "Poor babe!" said the old lady to Lady Lothrop, "who could have had a heart to desert such a child? And this is the boy," she said, drawing Harry to her and looking tenderly at him. "Well, a father of the fatherless is God in his holy habitation." There was something even grand about the fervour of this sentence as she uttered it, and Tina put up her hand with a caressing gesture around the withered old neck.



"Debby, get these poor children a cake," said the lady to a brisk, energetic, rather high-stepping individual, who now entered the apartment.

"Come now, mother, do let it rest till supper-time. If we let you alone, you would murder all the children in your neighbourhood with cake and sugar-plums; you'd be as bad as King Herod."

Miss Debby was a well-preserved, up-and-down, positive, cheery, sprightly maiden lady of an age lying somewhere in the indeterminate region between forty and sixty. There was a positive, brusque way about all her movements, and she advanced to the fire, rearranged the wood, picked up stray brands, and whisked up the coals with a brush, and then, seating herself bolt upright, took up the business of making our acquaintance in the most precise and systematic manner.

"So this is Master Horace Holyoke. How do you do, sir?"

As previously directed, I made my best bow with anxious politeness.

"And this is Master Harry Percival, is it?" Harry did the same.

"And this," she added, turning to Tina, "is Miss Tina Percival, I understand? Well, we are very happy to see *good* little children in this house always." There was a rather severe emphasis on the *good*, which, together with the somewhat martial and disciplinary air which invested all Miss Deborah's words and actions, was calculated to strike children with a wholesome awe.

Our resolution "to be very good indeed" received an immediate accession of strength. At this moment a serving-maid appeared at the door, and, with eyes cast down, and a stiff respectful courtesy, conveyed the information, "If you please, ma'am, tea is ready."

This humble, self-abased figure—the utter air of self-abnegation with which the domestic seemed to intimate that, unless her mistress pleased, tea was not ready, and that everything in creation was to be either ready or not ready according to her sovereign will and good pleasure—was to us children a new lesson in decorum.

“Go tell Lady Widgery that tea is served,” said Miss Deborah, in a loud, resounding voice. “Tell her that we will wait her ladyship’s convenience.”

The humble serving-maid courtesied, and closed the door softly with reverential awe. On the whole, the impression upon our minds was deeply solemn; we were about to see her ladyship.

Lady Widgery was the last rose of summer of the departed aristocracy. Lady Lothrop’s title was only by courtesy; but Sir Thomas Widgery was a live baronet; and as there were to be no more of these splendid dispensations in America, one may fancy the tenderness with which old Tory families cherished the last lingering remnants.

The door was soon opened again, and a bundle of black silk appeared, with a pale, thin face looking out of it. There was to be seen the glitter of a pair of sharp, black eyes, and the shimmer of a thin white hand with a diamond ring upon it. These were the items that made up Lady Widgery, as she dawned upon our childish vision.

Lest the reader should conceive any false hopes or impressions, I may as well say that it turned out, on further acquaintance, that these items were about all there was of Lady Widgery. It was one of the cases where nature had picked up a very indifferent and commonplace soul, and shut it up in a very intelligent-looking body. From her youth up, Lady Widgery’s principal attraction consisted in looking as

if there was a great deal more in her than there really was. Her eyes were sparkling and bright, and had a habit of looking at things in this world with keen, shrewd glances, as if she were thinking about them to some purpose, which she never was. Sometimes they were tender and beseeching, and led her distracted admirers to feel as if she were melting with emotions that she never dreamed of. Thus Lady Widgery had always been rushed for and contended for by the other sex; and one husband had hardly time to be cold in his grave before the air was filled with the rivalry of candidates to her hand; and after all, the beautiful little hoax had nothing for it but her attractive soul-case. In her old age she still looked elegant, shrewd, and keen, and undeniably highbred, and carried about her the prestige of rank and beauty. Otherwise she was a little dry bundle of old prejudices, of faded recollections of past conquests and gaieties, and weakly concerned about her own health, which, in her view, and that of everybody about her, appeared a most sacred subject. She had a somewhat entertaining manner of rehearsing the gossip and scandals of the last forty years, and was, so far as such a person could be, religious: that is to say, she kept all the feasts and fasts of the Church scrupulously. She had, in a weakly way, a sense of some responsibility in this matter, because she was Lady Widgery, and because infidelity was prevailing in the land, and it became Lady Widgery to cast her influence against it. Therefore it was that, even at the risk of her precious life, as she thought, she had felt it imperative to come to Boston to celebrate Easter Sunday.

When she entered the room, there was an immediate bustle of welcome. Lady Lothrop ran up to her, saluting her with an appearance of great fondness, mingled, I thought, with a sort of extreme deference. Miss Deborah was pressing

in her attentions. "Will you sit a moment before tea to get your feet warm, or will you go out at once? The dining-room is quite warm."

Lady Widgery's feet were quite warm, and everybody was *so* glad to hear it, that we were filled with wonder.

Then she turned and fixed her keen, dark eyes on us, as if she were reading our very destiny, and asked who we were. We were all presented circumstantially, and the brilliant eyes seemed to look through us shrewdly, as we made our bows and courtesies. One would have thought that she was studying us with a deep interest, which was not the case.

We were now marshalled out to the tea-table, where we children had our plates put in a row together, and were waited on with obsequious civility by Mrs. Margery and another equally starched and decorous female, who was the attendant of Lady Widgery. We stood at our places a moment, while the lovely old lady, raising her trembling hand, pronounced the words of the customary grace: "For what we are now about to receive, the Lord make us truly thankful." Her voice trembled as she spoke, and somehow the impression of fragility and sanctity that she made on me, awoke in me a sort of tender awe. When the blessing was over, the maids seated us, and I had leisure to notice the entirely new scene about me.

It was all conducted with an inexpressible stateliness of propriety, and, in an undefined way, the impression was produced upon my mind that the frail, shivery, rather thin and withered little being, enveloped in a tangle of black silk wraps, was something inexpressibly sacred and sublime. Miss Deborah waited on her constantly, pressingly, energetically; and the dear, sweet old white-haired lady tended her with obsequiousness, which, like everything else that she did, was

lost in lovingness; and Lady Lothrop, to me the most awe-inspiring of the female race, paled her ineffectual fires, and bowed her sacred head to the rustling little black silk bundle, in a way that made me inwardly wonder. The whole scene was so different from the wide, rough, noisy, free-and-easy democracy of my grandmother's kitchen, that I felt crusted all over with an indefinite stiffness of embarrassment, as if I had been dipped in an alum-bath. At the head of the table there was an old silver tea-urn, looking heavy enough to have the weight of whole generations in it, into which, at the moment of sitting down, a serious-visaged waiting-maid dropped a red-hot weight, and forthwith the noise of a violent boiling arose. We little folks looked at each other inquiringly, but said nothing. All was to us like an enchanted palace. The great, mysterious tea-urn, the chased silver tea-caddy, the precise and well-considered movements of Miss Deborah as she rinsed the old embossed silver tea-pots in the boiling water, the India-china cups and plates, painted with the family initials and family crest, all were to us solemn signs and symbols of that upper table-land of gentility into which we were forewarned by Aunt Lois we were to enter.

"There," said Miss Deborah, with emphasis, as she poured and handed to Lady Widgery a cup of tea,—“there's some of the tea that my brother saved at the time of that disgraceful Boston riot, when Boston Harbour was floating with tea-chests. His cargo was rifled in the most scandalous manner, but he went out in a boat and saved some at the risk of his life.”

Now my most sacred and enthusiastic remembrance was of the glow of patriotic fervour with which, seated on my grandfather's knee, I had heard the particulars of that event at a time when names and dates and dress, and time, place,

and circumstance, had all the life and vividness of a recent transaction. I cannot describe the clarion tones in which Miss Deborah rung out the word *disgraceful*, in connexion with an event which had always set my blood boiling with pride and patriotism. Now, as if convicted of sheep-stealing, I felt myself getting red to the very tips of my ears.

"It was a shameful proceeding," sighed Lady Widgery, in her pretty, high-bred tones, as she pensively stirred the amber fluid in her tea-cup. "I never saw Sir Thomas so indignant at anything in all my life, and I'm sure it gave me a sick-headache for three days, so that I had to stay shut up in a dark room, and couldn't keep the least thing on my stomach. What a mysterious providence it is that such conduct should be suffered to lead to success!"

"Well," said Lady Lothrop, sipping her tea on the other side, "clouds and darkness are about the Divine dispensations; but let us hope it will be all finally overruled for the best."

"Oh, come!" said Miss Debby, giving a cheerful, victorious crow of defiance from behind her tea-pots. "Dorothy will be down on us with the tip-end of one of her husband's sermons, of course. Having married a Continental Congress parson, she has to say the best she can; but I, Deborah Kittery, who was never yet in bondage to any man, shall be free to have *my* say to the end of my days, and I *do* say that the Continental Congress is an abomination in the land, and the leaders of it, if justice had been done, they would all have been hanged high as Haman; and that there is one house in old Boston, at the north end, and not far from the spot where we have the honour to be, where King George now reigns as much as ever he did, and where law and order prevail in spite of General Washington and Mrs. Martha, with her court and train. It puts me out of all manner of patience to read



the papers,—receptions to 'em here, there, and everywhere;—I should like to give 'em a reception."

"Come, come, Deborah, my child, you must be patient," said the old lady. "The Lord's ways are not as our ways. He knows what is best."

"I daresay He does, mother; but we know He does let wickedness triumph to an awful extent. I think myself He's given this country up."

"Let us hope not," said the mother, fervently.

"Just look at it," said Miss Deborah. "Has not this miserable rebellion broken up the true Church in this country just as it was getting a foothold? has it not shaken hands with French infidelity? Thomas Jefferson is a scoffing infidel, and he drafted their old Declaration of Independence, which, I will say, is the most abominable and blasphemous document that ever sinners dared to sign."

"But General Washington was a Churchman," said Lady Widgery, "and they were always very careful about keeping the feasts and fasts. Why, I remember, in the old times, I have been there to Easter holidays, and we had a splendid ball."

"Well, then, if he was in the true Church, so much the worse for him," said Miss Deborah. "There is some excuse for men of Puritan families, because their ancestors were schismatics and disorganisers to begin with, and came over here because they didn't like to submit to lawful government. For my part, I have always been ashamed of having been born here. If I'd been consulted, I should have given my voice against it."

"Debby, child, how you do talk!" said the old lady.

"Well, mother, what can I do but talk? and it's a pity if I shouldn't be allowed to do that. If I had been a man I'd have fought; and if I could have my way now, I'd go back



to England and live, where there's some religion and some government."

"I don't see," said the old lady, "but people are doing pretty well under the new government."

"Indeed, mother; how can you know anything about it? There's a perfect reign of infidelity and immorality begun. Why, look here, in Boston and Cambridge things are going just as you might think they would. The college fellows call themselves D'Alembert, Rousseau, Voltaire, and other French heathen names; and there's Ellery Davenport! just look at him,—came straight down from generations of Puritan ministers, and hasn't half as much religion as my cat there; for 'Tom does know how to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters."

Here there was such a burst of pleading feminine eloquence on all hands as showed that general interest which often pervades the female breast for some bright, naughty, wicked, prodigal son. Lady Widgery and old Mrs. Kittery and Lady Lothrop all spoke at once. "Indeed, Miss Deborah,"—"Come, come, Debby,"—"You are too bad; he goes to church with us sometimes."

"To church, does he?" said Miss Debby, with a toss; "and what does he go for? Simply to ogle the girls."

"We should be charitable in our judgments," said Lady Widgery.

"Especially of handsome young men," said Miss Debby, with strong irony. "You all know he doesn't believe as much as a heathen. They say he reads and speaks French like a native, and that's all I want to know of anybody. I've no opinion of such people; a good honest Christian has no occasion to go out of his own language, and when he does, you may be pretty sure it's for no good."

"Oh, come now, Deborah, you are too sweeping altogether," said Lady Lothrop; "French is, of course, an elegant accomplishment."

"I never saw any good of the French language, for my part, I must confess," said Miss Debby, "nor, for that matter, of the French nation either; they eat frogs, and break the Sabbath, and are as immoral as the old Canaanites. It's just exactly like them to aid and abet this unrighteous rebellion. They always hated England, and they take delight in massacres and rebellions, and every kind of mischief, ever since the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Well, well, we shall see what'll come of these ungodly, levelling principles in time. 'All men created free and equal,' forsooth. Just think of that! clearly against the Church catechism."

"Of course that is infidelity," said Lady Widgery, confidently. "Sir Thomas used to say it was the effect on the lower classes he dreaded. You see these lower classes are something dreadful; and what's to keep them down if it isn't religion? as Sir Thomas used to say when he always would go to church Sundays. He felt such a responsibility."

"Well," said Miss Deborah, "you'll see. I predict we shall see the time when your butcher, and your baker, and your candlestick-maker will come into your parlour and take a chair as easy as if they were your equals, and every servant-maid will be thinking she must have a silk gown like her mistress. That's what we shall get by our revolution."

"But let us hope it will be all over-ruled for good," said Lady Lothrop.

"Oh! over-ruled, over-ruled!" said Miss Deborah. "Of course it will be over-ruled. Sodom and Gomorrah were over-ruled for good, but 't was a great deal better not to be living there about those times." Miss Debby's voice had got

upon so high a key, and her denunciations began to be so terrifying, that the dear old lady interposed.

"Well, children, do let's love one another, whatever we do," she said; "and, Debby, you mustn't talk so hard about Ellery,—he's your cousin, you know."

"Besides, my dear," said Lady Widgery, "great allowances should be made for his domestic misfortunes."

"I don't see why a man need turn infidel and rebel because his wife has turned out a madwoman," said Miss Debby; "what did he marry her for?"

"Oh my dear, it was a family arrangement to unite the two properties," said Lady Widgery. "You see all the great Pierrepont estates came in through her, but then she was quite shocking,—very peculiar always, but after her marriage her temper was dreadful,—it made poor Ellery miserable, and drove him from home; it really was a mercy when it broke out into real insanity, so that they could shut her up. I've always had great tenderness for Ellery on that account."

"Of course you have, because you're a lady. Did I ever know a lady yet that didn't like Ellery Davenport, and wasn't ready to go to the stake for him? For my part I hate him, because, after all, he humbugs me, and will make me like him in spite of myself. I have to watch and pray against him all the time."

And as if, by the odd law of attraction which has given birth to the proverb that somebody is always nearest when you are talking about him, at this moment the dining-room door was thrown open, and the old man-servant announced "Colonel Ellery Davenport."

"Colonel!" said Miss Debby, with a frown and an accent of contempt. "How often must I tell Hawkins not to use

those titles of the old rebel mob army? Insubordination is beginning to creep in, I can see."

These words were lost in the bustle of the entrance of one on whom, after listening to all the past conversation, we children looked with very round eyes of attention. What we saw was a tall, graceful young man, whose air and movements gave a singular impression of both lightness and strength. He carried his head on his shoulders with a jaunty, slightly haughty air, like that of a thorough-bred young horse, and there was quality and breeding in every movement of his body. He was dressed in the imposing and picturesque fashion of those times, with a slight military suggestion in its arrangements. His hair was powdered to a dazzling whiteness, and brushed off his low Greek forehead, and the powder gave that peculiar effect to the eye and complexion which was one of the most distinctive traits of that style of costume. His eyes were of a deep violet blue, and of that lively, flashing brilliancy which a painter could only represent by double lights. They seemed to throw out light like diamonds. He entered the room bowing and smiling with the gay good-humour of one sure of pleasing. An inspiring sort of cheerfulness came in with him, that seemed to illuminate the room like a whole stream of sunshine. In short, he fully justified all Miss Deborah's fears.

In a moment he had taken a rapid survey of the party; he had kissed the hand of the dear old lady; he had complimented Lady Widgery; he had inquired with effusion after the health of Parson Lothrop, and ended all by an adroit attempt to kiss Miss Deborah's hand, which earned him a smart little cuff from that wary belligerent.

"No rebels allowed on these premises," said Miss Debby, sententiously.

"On my soul, cousin, you forget that peace has been declared," he said, throwing himself into a chair with a *non-chalant* freedom.

"Peace! not in our house. I haven't surrendered, if Lord Cornwallis has," said Miss Debby, "and I consider you as the enemy."

"Well, Debby, we must love our enemies," said the old lady, in a pleading tone.

"Certainly you must," he replied quickly; "and here I've come to Boston on purpose to go to church with you to-morrow."

"That's right, my boy," said the old lady. "I always knew you'd come into right ways at last."

"Oh, there are hopes of me, certainly," he said; "if the gentler sex will only remember their mission, and be guardian angels, I think I shall be saved in the end."

"You mean that you are going to wait on pretty Lizzie Cabot to church to-morrow," said Miss Debby; "that's about all the religion there is in it."

"Mine is the religion of beauty, fair cousin," said he. "If I had had the honour of being one of the Apostles, I should have put at least one article of that effect into our highly respectable creed."

"Ellery Davenport, you are a scoffer."

"What, I? because I believe in the beautiful? What is goodness but beauty? and what is sin but bad taste? I could prove it to you out of my grandfather Edwards's works, *passim*, and I think nobody in New England would dispute him."

"I don't know anything about him," said Miss Debby, with a toss. "He wasn't in the Church."

“Mere matter of position, cousin. Couldn't very well be when the Church was a thousand miles across the water; but he lived and died a stanch loyalist,—an aristocrat in the very marrow of his bones, as anybody may see. The whole of his system rests on the undisputed right of big folks to eat up little folks in proportion to their bigness, and the Creator, being biggest of all, is dispensed from all obligation to seek anything but His own glory. Here you have the root-doctrine of the divine right of kings and nobles, who have only to follow their Maker's example in their several spheres, as his blessed Majesty King George has of late been doing with his American colonies. If he had got the treatise on true virtue by heart, he could not have carried out its principles better.”

“Well, now, I never knew that there was so much good in President Edwards before,” said Lady Widgery, with simplicity. “I must get my maid to read me that treatise some time.”

“Do, madam,” said Ellery. “I think you will find it exactly adapted to your habits of thought, and extremely soothing.”

“It will be a nice thing for her to read me to sleep with,” said Lady Widgery, innocently.

“By all means,” said Ellery, with an indescribable mocking light in his great blue eyes.

For my own part, having that strange, vibrating susceptibility of constitution which I have described as making me peculiarly impressible by the moral sphere of others, I felt in the presence of this man a singular and painful contest of attraction and repulsion, such as one might imagine to be produced by the near approach of some beautiful but dangerous animal. His singular grace and brilliancy awoke in me an

undefined antagonism akin to antipathy, and yet, as if under some enchantment, I could not keep my eyes off from him, and eagerly listened to everything that he had to say.

With that quick insight into human nature which enabled him, as by a sort of instinct, to catch the reflex of every impression which he made on any human being, he surveyed the row of wide-open, wondering, admiring eyes, which followed him at our end of the table.

"Aha! what have we here?" he said, as he advanced and laid his hand on my head. I shuddered and shook it off with a feeling of pain and dislike amounting to hatred.

"How now, my little man?" he said; "what's the matter here?" and then he turned to Tina. "Here's a little lady will be more gracious, I know," and he stooped and attempted to kiss her.

The little lady drew her head back and repulsed him with the dignity of a young princess.

"Upon my word," he said, "we learn the tricks of our trade early, don't we? Pardon me, *petite mademoiselle*," he said, as he retreated, laughing. "So you don't like to be kissed?"

"Only by proper persons," said Tina, with that demure gravity which she could at times so whimsically assume, but sending with the words a long mischievous flash from under her downcast eyelashes.

"Upon my word, if there isn't one that's perfect in Mother Eve's catechism at an early age," said Ellery Davenport. "Young lady, I hope for a better acquaintance with you one of these days."

"Come, Ellery, let the child alone," said Miss Debby; "why should you be teaching all the girls to be forward? If you notice her so much she will be vain."



"That's past praying for, anyhow," said he, looking with admiration at the dimpling, sparkling face of Tina, who evidently was dying to answer him back. "Don't you see the monkey has her quiver full of arrows?" he said. "Do let her try her infant hand on me."

But Miss Debby, eminently proper, rose immediately, and broke up the tea-table session by proposing adjournment to the parlour.

After this we had family prayers, the maid-servants and man-servant being called in and ranged in decorous order on a bench that stood prepared for exactly that occasion in a corner of the room. Miss Deborah placed a stand, with a great quarto edition of the Bible and prayer-book, before her mother, and the old lady read in a trembling voice the psalm, the epistle, and the gospel for Easter-evening, and then, all kneeling, the evening prayers. The sound of her tremulous voice, and the beauty of the prayers themselves, which I vaguely felt, impressed me so much that I wept, without knowing why, as one sometimes does at plaintive music. One thing in particular filled me with a solemn surprise; and that was the prayers, which I had never heard before, for "The Royal Family of England." The trembling voice rose to fervent clearness on the words, "We beseech Thee, with Thy favour, to behold our most Sovereign Lord, King George, and so replenish him with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, that he may alway incline to Thy will, and walk in Thy way. Endue him plenteously with heavenly gifts, grant him in health and wealth long to live, strengthen him that he may vanquish and overcome all his enemies, and finally after this life may attain everlasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

The loud "Amen" from Miss Debby which followed this, heartily chorussed as it was by the well-taught man-servant

and maid-servants, might have done any king's heart good. For my part, I was lost in astonishment; and when the prayer followed "for the gracious Queen Charlotte, their Royal Highnesses, George, Prince of Wales, the Princess Dowager of Wales, and all the Royal Family," my confusion of mind was at its height. All these unknown personages were to be endued with the Holy Spirit, enriched with heavenly grace, and brought to an everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. I must confess that all I had heard of them previously, in my education, had not prepared me to see the propriety of any peculiar celestial arrangements in their favour; but the sweet and solemn awe inspired by the trembling voice which pleaded went a long way towards making me feel as if there must have been a great mistake in my bringing up hitherto.

When the circle rose from their knees, Ellery Davenport said to Miss Debby, "It's a pity the king of England couldn't know what stanch supporters he has in Boston."

"I don't see," said the old lady, "why they won't let us have that prayer read in churches now; it can't do any harm."

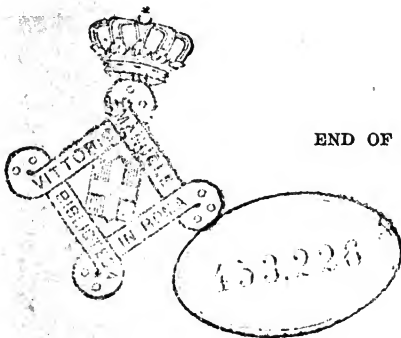
"I don't, either," said Ellery. "For my part, I don't know any one who needs praying for more than the King of England; but the prayers of the Church don't appear to have been answered in his case. If he had been in the slightest degree 'endowed with heavenly gifts,' he needn't have lost these American colonies."

"Come, Ellery, none of your profane talk," said Miss Debby; "*you* don't believe in anything good."

"On the contrary, I always insist on seeing the good before I believe; I should believe in prayer, if I saw any good come from it."

"For shame, Ellery, when children are listening to you!" said Miss Debby. "But come, my little folks," she added, rising briskly, "it's time for these little eyes to be shut."

The dear old lady called us all to her, and kissed us "good night," laying her hand gently on our heads as she did so. I felt the peaceful influence of that hand go through me like music, and its benediction even in my dreams.



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